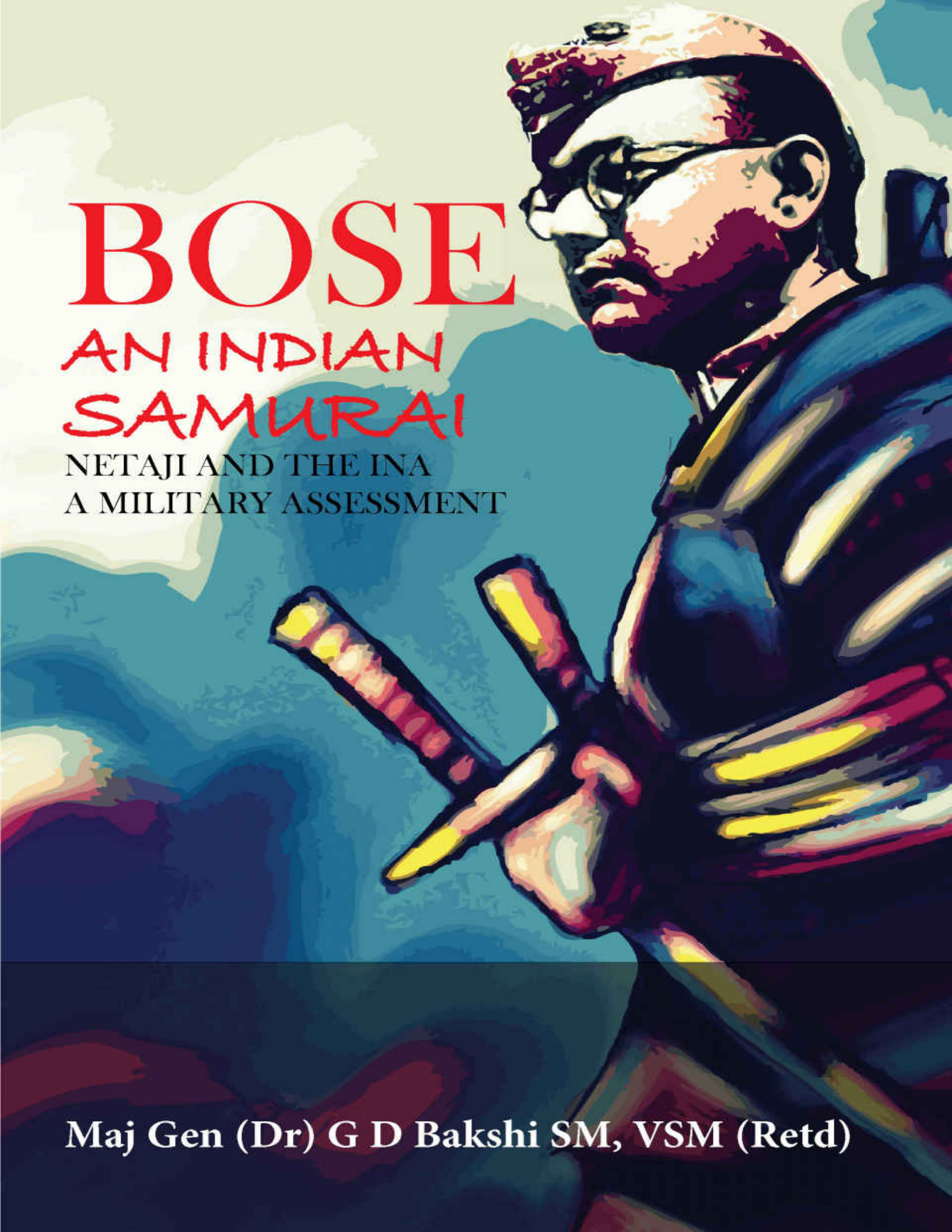
BOSE

AN INDIAN SAMURAI

NETAJI AND THE INA
A MILITARY ASSESSMENT



Maj Gen (Dr) G D Bakshi SM, VSM (Retd)

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A Military Assessment

Maj Gen (Dr) **G D Bakshi** SM, VSM (Retd)

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Dedicated to
that Icon of Indian Nationalism Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose
who truly qualifies to be an Indian Samurai
and to all ranks of the Indian National Army
because of whose tremendous sacrifice India is today a free country.

Also dedicated to the efforts of
the Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose INA Trust
which has struggled to keep alive and
cherish Netaji's memories and ideals of Nationalism.

"The way of the Samurai is found in death. When it comes to either or, there is only the quick choice of death...We all want to live and to a large part, we make our logic according to what we like. By setting his heart right every morning and evening, the Samurai is able to live as though his body were already dead, he gains freedom along the way"

– Yamamoto Tsunetomo Hagakure
The Book of The Samurai

"The contribution made by Netaji S. C. Bose towards the achievement of freedom in 1945 was no less and perhaps more important than that of Mahatma Gandhi."

– R.C. Majumdar, Historian

"This is the first occasion when an anti-British politician has acquired a hold over substantial number of men in the Indian Army and the consequences are quite incalculable..The cabinet should consider quite carefully what to do with him. If he could be disposed off without being sent back to India , I am sure it would be a good thing."

– Lord Wavell , Viceroy of India

"He was certainly always a nationalist. For him, the Indian Nation was an idea, the very antithesis of the princely states and the caste system and linguistic conflicts, and above all, the very antithesis of Jinnah's theory of two nations."

– Anton Pelinka

"The British no longer feared Gandhi or Nehru, but they feared Bose and the violence he represented, and his suddenly amplified figure overawed the conferences that were to lead to independence."

– Michael Edwards

Foreword

This is a path breaking book in many respects. To the best of my knowledge and belief, it is the first book by a former general that seeks to carry out a professional appraisal of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose as a military leader and India's first "Supreme Commander". It also seeks to objectively evaluate the military performance of the Indian National Army (INA) to validate the success of the military motivational model it was premised on.

The INA was based on the motivational power of "militant nationalism". In that it resembled the German Whermacht and the Imperial Japanese Army, far more than the British Indian Army. Though the bulk of its soldiers were former prisoners of war from the colonial British Indian Army – it had done away entirely with its ethnicity based Regimental model of motivation and shifted to an All-India All-Class model of organisation. The emotive fuel for fighting in the INA came entirely from militant nationalism.

So, did this model work in actual combat?

The author has done pain- staking research and marshalled an array of combat records, memoirs and data to prove that despite the highly adverse circumstances, the INA units and formations put in stellar combat performances. In the Imphal-Kohima campaigns – the INA units kept pace with the hard marching Imperial Japanese Army in its infiltration and envelopment manoeuvres. They retained their combat cohesion even when units were decimated to the extent of 60-80 percent. The best tribute came from the enemy. Peter W. Fay records a conversation between Maj Gen Gracy (the then GOC 20 Indian Division) with Col Prem Sahgal of the INA.

An irate Gen Gracy asked Prem, "What did you mean, you people by going on fighting? We had armour, artillery, you chaps had nothing. But

instead of surrendering, you fought. It was madness. Why did you do it? Why didn't you come over?"

"Of course it was madness", Col Prem Sahgal of the INA had replied calmly. "A revolutionary Army lives on the spirit of madness."

This is the best tribute the INA could get about its fighting spirit and it came from the enemy himself.

Re-writing History

However, in my view, the greatest contribution of this book is to reopen the seminal debate about how India won its freedom from the British rule. For decades, we have been fed a contrived national narrative about how we got our freedom. The Nehruvian narrative, fashioned by court historians, stated that India got its freedom due to the use of purely the soft power of *Ahimsa,* non-violence and *Satyagraha* or soul force. Violence had absolutely no role to play in India getting its independence. This contrived narrative went to inordinate lengths to downplay the role of Netaji and his INA. It tried to hide the fact that out of some 60,000 men of the INA, some 26,000 (as per its official history) had been killed. This was hardly a non-violent struggle. Any nation that seeks to gloss over the martyrdom of 26,000 of its soldiers hardly does justice to its own history.

The author, through this eminently researched book, has attempted to restore balance to the narrative of how India obtained its independence from British rule. Britain had been victorious in the Second World War. Both Germany and Japan had been vanquished and there was no plausible reason which could explain why Britain which thrived economically on her colonies (particularly India), would de-colonise in such a hurry and give up her jewel in the crown to pacifist forces led by the Gandhi-Nehru combine .This issue becomes particularly intriguing when one knows that the two world wars were extremely debilitating for Britain and she required her colonies to recuperate her economic prowess. The author through his research and analysis offers a plausible explanation for this stranger than fiction phenomenon as it pertains to India.

In India, the pacifists to whom the British transferred power, attributed India's independence not to pacifism, but to the huge moral force generated by pacifism. This was claimed as India's unique contribution to world affairs —a route away from the brute geopolitics practiced by Europe, US and

Japan. This moral articulation soon found its way to the formation of the Non- Aligned- Movement (NAM) by many global ,aspiring light weights . Hard power was to be chastened by Pacifist soft power armed with debate as it main instrument to drive sense into errant nations. NAM as history shows, remained an effete debating society throughout, since it lacked economic/financial and military clout, essential ingredients to any power play.

The seeds of India's pacifism, therefore lie elsewhere. They lie in India's immediate history and in the minds of those who were negotiating India's independence and events that led to India's final freedom. It lies in the two competing approaches within the Congress Party itself—one led by Gandhi –Nehru combine who felt that recourse lay in appealing to the sensibilities of the British and in civil disobedience in order to gain independence. Any attempt to exploit British difficulties during the war was unethical. Sending over 2.5 million soldiers to fight for the British was part of this strategy of appealing to British sensibilities .There, however was another very powerful contra view –one that believed that the British would never leave on their own and that the War presented a unique opportunity to Indians to garner support from Britain's enemies i.e. Germany & Japan and fight ones way to independence. Martyrs like Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev, Rajguru and later, none other than the president of the Congress itself, Subhash Chandra Bose openly espoused such a course . This led to the removal of Bose from the Congress and this constituted the final breach between the pacifists and militant elements within Congress, India's only pan- Indian political party before independence.

Subhash Chandra Bose's tenacious belief in the righteousness of the militant approach led him to Germany; from there on to Japan where he was to raise the Indian National Army (INA) largely from Indian soldiers held prisoners in Japanese prisoner of war camps. The INA fought against British formations in Burma and acquitted itself with distinction; approximately 26,000 laid down their lives in pursuit of their dream of seeing India free of foreign yolk. In its construct, the INA was a Secular Nationalist force in the true sense .It comprised of all communities which formed India's prosaic panorama and above all, was officered entirely by Indian officers --- something that the British never permitted.

The 1946 Military Revolt

What the Nehruvian narrative of court historians glosses over most unfairly, is the major impact of the INA trials, which led to widespread revolts and mutinies in the Royal Indian Navy, the Royal Indian Air Force and finally, the British Indian Army units in Jabalpur that took place in February 1946. These revolts so completely panicked the British Higher Command that in one year flat, they decided to quit India in the most unseemly haste in August 1947. The impact of the First Military Revolt of 1857 is well known and well documented. The Nehruvian court historians documented this in detail, simply because it had failed. The underlying motive was perhaps to highlight the failure of military methods to overthrow the empire and by sheer contrast, glorify the soft power approach of Ahimsa/non-violence. The bitter truth is that non- violence had failed entirely to drive out the British. They had quelled the 1942 Quit India Movement with brute military force – employing some Five divisions worth of white troops. What the court historians gloss over is the role of the INA's violence and the mutinies it inspired in the British Indian Armed Forces in 1946. In the deliberate failure to acknowledge the catalysing role of the 1946 military revolts – lie the seeds of deliberate distortions of Indian History.

Defanging a Rising Power through Pacifism

This simple historical fact is that by the end of the Second World War – India had fielded a record All-Volunteer Army of some 2.5 million men. It had fought against the Germans and Italians; and had done the bulk of the heavy lifting against the Japanese in Burma. By the end of 1943, British military commanders clearly preferred having Indian units and formations under them, rather than the British Army units. The British troops were showing clear signs of war weariness and fatigue and just wanted to return home the earliest. It was the Indian Divisions, who were proving tenacious and steadfast on both sides. Even the fledgling INA had covered itself with glory. The British clearly saw the potential of the military power of a united India. At the end of the war, they disbanded 11 of its 16 Indian Divisions. The 2.5 million man Army was rapidly downsized to just 350,000 or so. India was partitioned and even this rump Army was divided between the two states. Above all, the British exploited Indian pacifism to defang and disable the mighty power a united India could have become at the world

stage. The power potential of India was neutered by a pacifist regime whose first Prime Minister felt that India had no need for an Army – Police forces alone would suffice. For decades, Indian students in colleges were fed the dogma, that all expenditure on defence was a sunk cost and total waste of economic resources. Military units were asked to build their own cantonments to do something productive. This pacific mindset led to the complete marginalization of the military and a total slowdown on its modernization and expansion. This led to a most rude jolt into realism. India suffered a humiliating defeat at the hands of the Chinese. Pacifism was its first casualty and led to the onset of realism and realpolitik under Prime Ministers Shastri and Indira Gandhi. To place these issues in perspective , this book renders yeoman service in reopening the historical debate about how India actually got its freedom and the stellar role played by Netaji and his INA now merits a long belated recognition. Netaji has now become an icon of Indian nationalism that seems to be in dire need of resuscitation and revival.

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Former Chief of the Integrated Defence Staff

Prologue:
The Rise of Nationalism in India

There is hardly any Asiatic to whom the spectacle of Asia lying strangled at the feet of Europe does not cause pain and humiliation. But Asia has not been in this stage always…the time has come when a rejuvenated Asia will rise resplendent in power and glory and take her legitimate place in the comity of nations.

– Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose

"This is the first occasion when an anti-British politician has acquired a hold over substantial number of men in the Indian Army and the consequences are quite incalculable….the cabinet should consider quite carefully what to do with him. If he could be disposed off without being sent back to India, I am sure it would be a good thing".

– Lord Wavell, Viceroy of India

Nationalism and the Indian National Army (INA) of Bose

Where a nation state is going depends a lot on where it came from. What was the formative impulse for the establishment of the nation state? How precisely did it come into being? What was the nature of the struggle that led to its birth? What was the exact role of the use of force or the threat of use of force in this struggle? That in turn would help crystallise the nature of its

primary leadership and how its seminal institutions were formed and how efficiently they have performed thereafter?

This book seeks to trace the roots of nationalism and the emergence of a collective pan –Indian identity *per se* in India. *Few other states in the world have been subjected to such a sustained and concerted assault upon the very idea of their nationhood and the primal sense of self.* For over two centuries, India was ruled by an alien, colonial dispensation that did everything in its power to destroy the very idea of nationhood in India. India, it averred had never been a nation. It was a cauldron of competing castes, creeds, languages and ethnicities that have forever been at war with one another. *Hence it needed a foreign and extrinsic power to enforce order and provide Imperial justice and equity* between its constantly warring castes, tribes and religions. The very pervasive idea of caste divisions, they said, disqualified India from ever becoming a nation. Add to that the sharp religious polarisation and the need for foreign rule became self evident as per the apologists of colonial rule in India. Only a foreign power, they felt, could be impartial and neutral and thus adjudicate between the thousands of competing castes and creeds in the sub-continent. The colonial masters did their best to instil a collective sense of inferiority about the native culture, tradition and ethos. This seven thousand years old civilisation (as per carbon dating records), they told us, was a wild and uncivilised land which the British had to *emancipate* and unify. This deeply ingrained colonial narrative and the congenital sense of civilisational inferiority that it induced was so deeply internalised by its victims that even 68 years after independence it persists and militates against any idea of India as a free and powerful state. The subject of Indian Nationalism therefore, has far greater salience and relevance in India than in most other nations of Asia and perhaps the world.

There is a dire need today to take stock of where we are headed. There is a dire need to revive that primal sense of nationalism in India that is once again under assault from multiple directions. The recent debates on nationalism spurred by anti-India elements in the JNU and other campuses, have once again mounted an assault on the very idea of India. They question its very territorial integrity and unity and advocate the right to break up the union under the pretext of free speech. One way of reviving the very idea of nationalism in India is to hearken back to one of the most iconic figures of our freedom struggle- Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose and his Indian National Army (INA). That is why we in the Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose INA Trust,

had deliberately taken upon ourselves to stoke an old controversy as to what happened to one of the primal icons of our freedom struggle. His fate has been shrouded in mystery and intrigue and that is why, even after 68 years of independence the time has come to seek closure and squarely face the truth of what happened to the man who was primarily responsible for our freedom. Was he eliminated? By whom and why? Did he die in an air crash in Taihoku in Taiwan on 18 August 1945, as we have been told or was he incarcerated in a Soviet Gulag (Camp no 48 in Lezhnevesky district , 50 km from Suzdal in Siberia). Apparently this had happened when he tried to flee to Manchuria to continue the freedom struggle after the surrender of Japan. Did the Soviets hand him over as a war criminal to the British? In the light of two secret agreements between the NKVD of the USSR and MI-6 of Great Britain regarding intelligence sharing and cooperation in covert operations that had been signed in December 1941 and again in March 1944, this does emerge as a fair possibility. Was he thereafter subjected to sustained torture and then eliminated as a war criminal either by Soviet or British Intelligence agencies? If so, did the Indian government know about it? If it did, what efforts did it make to free him and get him back to his country? There is the horrible speculation that the Indian government of the Nehru era, in fact, connived in covering up his sustained interrogation and murder by the British/Soviet Gulags by spreading the canard that he had indeed died in an air crash?

There is the third hypothesis that avers that somewhere in 1953, the Soviets set him free and he came back to India to live his life as an ascetic recluse in Faizabad. Clinical evidence of DNA tests however, does not confirm this hypothesis as the DNA of the said Gumnami Baba does not match with the DNA of the Bose family (as stated in the Mukherjee Commission of Inquiry pp 120-121). The British had not been able to force Bose to keep silent even during the colonial rule. Would such an outspoken man live in fear of the British in India, so long after they had departed? The Baba's silence was wholly out of character with this fiery and outspoken personality.

There is yet one more hypothesis. Bose never reached Siberia. He was being closely shadowed by the British intelligence and he was assassinated either by shooting down his plane or by sending an assassination squad of the British MI-6 and Special Operations Executive (SOE). Churchill had reportedly ordered his assassination in 1941- when he had entered

Afghanistan and was trying to escape to Germany. It was expected that he would try to go to Germany via Turkey and the Special Operations Executive was tasked to assassinate him when he attempted this route. In the instant case, Bose outwitted them by escaping via the USSR. However, based on this input, there are strong chances that this assassination could have been attempted after the war.

We in the INA Trust were asked as to why we were needlessly digging up old graves and trying to revive that decades old controversy? It was for two very good reasons. First, The TRUTH concerns us all and the speculations regarding the collaborative role of the Indian government were so shocking that it was essential to clear the air and peer deep into our collective psyches to witness the depths to which we could sink. There was also the *disturbing question about the role played by some elements of our Intelligence Services and perhaps senior functionaries of the bureaucracy who seemed to have retained residual loyalties to the Raj that virtually border on treason.* Why for instance was our IB still reporting to MI-5 in London, even after 20 years and more after Independence? But the real reason went beyond this voyage of discovery. Netaji was such an icon of our history that it was essential to invoke his memory today in the hope that *the very quest for Bose would revive that flagging spirit of militant nationalism in India.* I do think personally, that this second reason is far more important than all the others put together.

The Revision of History

There is perhaps a third set of reasons that are equally if not more compelling. This has to do with the need to urgently revisit the recent history of our freedom struggle and link the two periods of our contemporary, post independence history with how we gained that independence. This is a vital necessity because of bitter and wide spread allegations that our recent history has been deliberately falsified and distorted. That *the ruling dispensation after independence put out a deliberately distorted narrative of state that sought to establish that our freedom was gained entirely by the non-violent freedom struggle of Mahatma Gandhi and there was absolutely no contribution of the use of force or violence of any sort*. It was entirely the psychological pressure of soul force, *Ahimsa* and *satyagraha* that got us our cherished freedom. As per this narrative, it came ultimately as a gift bestowed by the British monarch who was so

deeply moved by our non-violent means and methods (and the lofty sermons on the purity of soul) that she decided to grant us this gift of freedom as a token of her unbounded compassion. That in appealing to her majesty, the rich and affluent lawyers of India, who had formed the Congress Party, acted as the pleaders on behalf of an entire people and *pleaded and argued their way to freedom*. The lawyers based Nehruvian dispensation had thus crafted a narrative of state based upon the fact that India was unique amongst all Westphalia states in the world in that it was not based on hard power and the state's monopoly of violence, but on the soft power of *ahimsa, satyagraha* and complete non-violence. Nehru, India's founding Statesman, therefore insisted that India needed no Armed forces and only Police forces would be sufficient. He made India an utterly soft and pacifist state. He completely marginalised the military from decision making and deliberately provided them insufficient resources till the disaster of 1962. It was a feel good narrative, both for the Leaders of the Congress and the departing Colonial rulers. But was this the unvarnished truth?

I'm afraid I cannot agree.

The Clement Atlee- Justice Chakraborty Dialogue

The History of the Freedom struggle, authored by an alleged family court historian by the name of Bipin Chandra, for instance, devotes just one and a half pages to Netaji Subhash Bose and his INA, in a verbose text of over 600 pages. Freedom, it insists, came entirely from our non-violent struggle and that is its central claim and thesis. Votaries of Bose and the INA claim that it was the physical violence of the INA and the mutinies that they inspired in the British Indian Armed Forces in 1946, that actually got us our freedom. In setting to rest this controversy, the primary source in this regard, should be Prime Minister Clement Atlee of Great Britain who had signed the Independence of India Act in 1947 and hence was the key decision maker with regard to the grant of freedom to India. His personal testimony ought to be final and conclusive evidence. It is worth studying this aspect.

Ranjan Bora , writing in the Journal of Historical Review (Vol No 3, 1982) in his article titled, "Subhash Bose, the INA and the War of Indian liberation", has cited the key British decision maker on the issue of India's Independence- Lord Clement Atlee, the Labour Prime Minister of Great Britain in 1947 himself, on the historical role of the INA. In 1956, Atlee had visited India and stayed in Kolkata as the guest of the then Governor of West

Bengal, Justice P. B. Chakraborty. They had a most remarkable conversation on how India had won her freedom. Justice Chakraborty remarked that the Quit India movement launched by the Congress in 1942 had been completely crushed and had petered out entirely by 1944. Why then did the British leave India in such a tearing hurry after the war? Atlee replied that it was because of the INA of Subhash Bose and the mutinies it had triggered in the British Indian Armed Forces.

Chakraborty then pointedly asked "What then was the role of Mahatma Gandhi's Quit India Movement in the grant of India's Independence?" He said and I quote 'Atlee's face twisted into a sarcastic smile as he spelt out the word "*minimal*". This is an emphatic assertion from a key and critical decision maker,that highlights the pivotal role played by the INA and Subhash Bose in the grant of freedom to India.

The fact is that as per the official history of The INA, out of a force of about 1500 officers and 60,000 soldiers (organised into three divisions) about 26,000 were killed. If accurate, it represents a casualty figure of some 44 percent which is awe inspiring in terms of sacrifice. It is well known that the Allies had the advantage of complete superiority in Air Power and that Malaria and sickness had taken a very heavy toll of the INA in the jungles of Burma. Can such a scale of casualties qualify as a non-violent struggle? It is a preposterous suggestion and insults the memory of those who laid down their lives for India's Independence. By any yardstick, their sacrifice ranks far higher than that of the non-violent Congress workers who were belaboured by Police lathis or simply went to Jail and asked for special status, privileges and treatment.

The INA might have lost the tactical battles of Kohima and Imphal but the historic fact is that they won the war for Indian Independence. The British made the mistake of an unabashedly triumphant gesture with a view to humiliate the Indians by putting 9 INA officers on trial in the iconic Red Fort at New Delhi (which was the final destination of the INA). Bahadur Shah Zafar, the last Mughal Emperor of India (in whose name the East India company had ruled), was also put on trial here, in the very same Red Fort after the revolt of 1857. The presence and the activities of the INA had been one of the best kept secrets of the war. The British Army had striven very hard to ensure that news about INA did not reach out to the military rank or file or the people of India. The INA trials now caused the truth to tumble out of the war time closet. For the first time the Indian people learnt that indeed

a sizeable Army had been raised to free India- that Indians of all castes, creeds and religion had come together to fight the British, that they had indeed fought bravely alongside the 15th Japanese Army and almost pulled it off in Manipur and Nagaland. Now they were being humiliated by a public trial. There was widespread national outrage that galvanised the moribund National Congress (which had all fight knocked out of it in 1942 and had cooled their heels behind bars since then). It forced them to try and revive the freedom struggle on the shoulders of the INA trials agitation. The wave of anger and indignation galvanised the whole country and energised the moribund National Congress to join the groundswell of national anger and outrage. The Congress was forced by the sheer intensity of public opinion to set up a Legal Defence Committee for the defence of the INA under trials. The Press called them misguided men and begged for clemency. National outrage however soon metamorphosed this into a national battle cry-"Patriots not traitors".

The Revolt of 1946

The key element of Bose's strategy was to hit at the vital support base of British Rule in India and that was the loyalty of the Indian soldiers of the British Indian Army. The very knowledge of the existence of the INA eroded this loyalty as Bose had correctly envisaged. The Armed forces were furious with the INA trials. In February 1946, about 20,000 sailors of the Royal Indian Navy on board of 78 ships mutinied. They went around Mumbai with portraits of Netaji and forced the British to shout Jai Hind and other INA slogans. Of course, immediate causes,as in 1857, were said to be poor food and housing conditions but the clear imprint of the INA inspiration was unmistakable as to how the revolt unfolded. They brought down the Union Jack on their ships and refused to obey their British officers. The British were terrified. About 2.5 million Indian soldiers were being de-mobilised and this was the most vulnerable period for any Army. This mutiny was followed by similar rebellions in the Royal Indian Air force and finally, in end February 1946, in the British Indian Army Units in Jabalpur. This was the last straw that broke the camel's back. Military Intelligence reports in 1946 clearly indicated that the Indian soldiers were furious and just could not be relied upon to obey their British officers. There were about 40,000 white troops in India then. Most were eager to get back home and were in no mood to fight

against 2.5 million battle hardened Indian soldiers who were then being de-mobilised. The racial slurs had been one too many and a clear revolt was brewing. Boards outside most posh clubs in India bore the sign "Indians and Dogs not allowed". The Indians had seen their British masters routed by the Japanese in Malaya, Singapore and Burma who failed to put up a dignified fight. This unflattering image had severely dented the power base of the Raj for ever. After the war the British clearly saw the writing on the wall and decided to quit with grace while they still had the time. That is how the British Government decided to grant India Independence in a tearing hurry. *Non-violence had nothing whatsoever to do with the final decision to quit.* It was simply the actual, demonstrated violence of the INA and the threat of widespread armed mutinies that it had inspired in the vast ranks of the 2.5 million Indian soldiers being de-mobilised after the war, that galvanised the British decision to quit and that too in a tearing hurry. Mountbatten accelerated this process to coincide Independence Day with the date of his victory over Japan - on 15 August, a date of considerable personal and vainglorious relevance to him. The whole process was whimsical and arbitrary. The aim perhaps, was to deliberately seed chaos. It led to the tragic holocaust of Partition, designed perhaps, to teach the natives a lesson that they could not rule themselves. It would only seed chaos. The only role played by the traditional leadership of the Congress in this very turbulent period perhaps, was that the British used them to pacify the inflamed Indian soldiers and sailors in 1946 and quietly accede to the partition proposal.

The British finally departed in August 1947 but their parting shot was to hand over power to an Anglophile elite who had confined themselves solely to non-violent and ineffectual means of protest. The Congress leadership treated the INA and military mutineers who had risen against their British officers as traitors and refused to accept the INA personal or the mutineers back in the Army and even denied them their war time pensions. Worse, they collaborated with the British Intelligence in keeping tabs on Netaji's family and kin and the released INA personnel. This intelligence was shared with the British intelligence almost till the early 1970s. This raises some very disturbing questions. How free were we really till the 1960s? Did senior segments of our bureaucracy and Intelligence services still retain their residual loyalty to the Raj? Why then did they continue to share intelligence about INA and Bose with MI-5? This made a mockery of the freedom we had obtained and virtually amounted to treachery/ sedition and worse.

These are the seminal questions that are being raised today and call for urgent answers. There is a crying need for us to examine our recent history and study the process of the transfer of power and the transition from colonial rule to Dominion status and then, at least in name, to full independence. How independent were we really in 1947 and after 1950? We made an article of faith about our autarky and ability for independence of thought and judgement in international affairs. The entire doctrine of Non-Alignment hinged upon this construct of autonomy and autarky. In the light of the revelations about Bose however, there are serious question marks being raised that are very disturbing and need urgent answers. Kingshuk Nag in his slim but very informative and thought provoking book (Netaji: Living Dangerously) makes this startling disclosure:-

"The IB meanwhile began trailing Netaji's relatives and released members of the INA…It may be noted that though India was nominally free, *The IB, which was a legacy from the British times maintained very close relations with the British MI-5. Years later in 2010, the official historian of the MI-5 would wonder whether Nehru knew all that was going on behind his bac*k!"(p 13)

The Historical Backdrop of the Freedom Struggle and its Linkage with the Present Scenario

It would be useful at this stage therefore, to look at Bose and his INA in the overall context of India's freedom struggle in some more detail. India had seen the first mass upsurge of nationalism in the 1857 uprising which started with wide-spread mutinies in the Presidency Armies of the East India Company. These soon metamorphosed into a general uprising spread all over north India. This revolt was sporadic and occurred in fits and starts. It was most brutally suppressed. Had all the Indian troops revolted together, it may well have spelt the end of British rule in India. After the uprising, Great Britain took direct charge of the Indian colony from the East India Company. *It set about to ensure that India would never again unite to overthrow the British empire in India; that it would forever remain fractured in terms of caste, creed, religion and language,* so that its diverse population would never again rise together to present a unified threat to the Raj. Thus, as Dr. Mithi Mukherjee writes in her seminal book–In the Shadow of Empire that the British started caste based census to deepen the idea of caste as a major divide and rule tactic. It then gave separate, religion based

electorates to the Muslims, Sikhs and Christians as also the Scheduled Castes and Tribes. The entire ideological basis of the empire was based on the thesis that India was such a fractured polity of warring communities, that justice could only be imposed by an external power. This was a highly successful programme to destroy the very idea of India and it worked efficiently for the next 60 years. When World War I started there was no revolt in India. The British IB in India had thoroughly penetrated the Ghadar cells in USA and elsewhere and foiled all their plans to send arms and ammunition to instigate a rebellion in India. The very professional and efficient IB had played a critical role in keeping India in chains. Safe from a revolt in India, the British could depute huge contingents of the British Indian Army to fight overseas. About 1.3 million Indian soldiers were ultimately sent out to Europe, Middle East and Africa and fought on those distant battlefields on the slogans of liberty, fraternity and equality. After the war, it was logical for the Indians to now expect some measure of gratitude from the empire. What they got instead was the massacre of Jallianwalah Bagh This massacre took place in the very province that had sent out the maximum soldiers to fight for the empire. The next major upsurge of nationalism therefore came immediately after this war in 1919, with this outrage of the Jallianwalah Bagh massacre.

The Non- Cooperation Movement

This led to the Gandhian mass based movement of non-cooperation. This did shake the empire for a while and served to unify the Indian masses towards a common purpose. Its best feature was that it reached out from the urban centres to involve the rural masses. This was however a non-violent movement and hence remained within the tolerance thresholds of the Raj. In fact, subsequently, they tacitly encouraged this non-violent strain in the freedom struggle. The Gandhian Freedom Movement's second problem was its episodic nature. It had made an excellent beginning in 1931 with a large and impressive mass mobilisation and the rousing of the Indian peasantry in the country side. When this entire effort was building up to a crescendo, Gandhiji called it off after the attack by violent mobs on the Police at Chaura Chura. This "fits and starts" approach detracted from the amounts of sustained psychological pressure it was imposing on the colonial power. Mass mobilisation for putting psychological pressure was a useful tool but it could never have been decisive by itself unless it was accompanied by some

degree of violence. The Second World War clearly provided that opportunity and Subhash Bose insisted that it should be exploited to the hilt. He rightly felt that it was now or never. This led to the clash between Bose and Gandhi and led to Netaji's ouster from the Congress and his subsequent audacious escape to Germany.

The final wave of nationalism in India thus came in the Second World War, when about 2.5 million Indian soldiers volunteered to fight on various battlefields of that global conflict. Though recruited to fight Britain's wars overseas, such a large corporate body of Indian soldiers, unwittingly, served to revive a larger, pan-Indian identity. They fought overseas as 'Indian Divisions' and they once again fought on slogans of liberty, equality and democratic values. By this time Gandhiji was veering around to the correctness of the stance of Bose. He now decided to take the plunge and launched the Quit India movement with the slogan of "Do or Die"(*Karo ya Maro*). The Congress Party's Quit India movement launched in 1942 however, was brutally suppressed by the British and had petered out entirely by 1943-44. The entire Congress leadership was jailed and draconian press censorship enforced to blank out all news relating to the freedom struggle. This was when Netaji Subhash Bose took charge of the Indian National Army (INA) which he expanded to a meaningful size of 60,000 men with about 25,000 Indian Prisoners of War with the Japanese and additional recruitment from the Indian diaspora in South East Asia. He joined the Japanese 15th Army in the invasion of India and the INA took an active part in the Battles of Kohima and Imphal. It was touch and go but finally Allied air power tilted the scales. The combined Japanese-INA invasion had come two years too late. By the time the Japanese had lost their air-superiority (which had made possible their earlier blitzes in 1941 in Malaya, Singapore and Burma). The Japanese Navy had also come under severe pressure from the US Navy in the Pacific. The INA lost the battles of Kohima and Imphal but won the war of Indian independence. How?

After the war, the British, in a very foolish, triumphalist gesture, put 3 INA officers on trial in the Red Fort. The secret of the INA now tumbled out of the war time closet. The nation was enraged. As stated earlier, what was far more significant however, were the widespread mutinies that it triggered in the Royal Indian Navy in 1946. About 20,000 sailors on board of 78 ships were involved. Mutinies also began in some units of the British Indian Army and Royal Indian Air Force. About 2.5 million Indian soldiers were being

demobilised after the war and they were enraged. The British simply panicked at this revolt and decided to quit India within two years by 1947. Indian nationalism had finally triumphed. The final results however were a little curious and mixed.

The British, "transferred power," (they did not grant Independence) to Nehru and his band of lawyers who led the Congress .The Tricolour flew but the Union Jack was not brought down. The British pretended that they had finally completed their civilising mission of emancipating the wild and savage people of the sub-continent, which they had at last welded into a nation state. Nehru now marginalised Gandhi and completely buried the role of Bose and the INA. He claimed that independence had come solely due to the non-violent struggle and hence India would now be a unique nation based on the soft power of *Ahimsa* alone. It would not need armed forces, Police would be sufficient. This pacific mindset ultimately led to the disaster of 1962. *The traumatic defeat of 1962, however, led to a revival of the flagging spirit of nationalism. The 1965 and 1971 wars with Pakistan served to unify the country and strengthen the idea of India by uniting the country against a hostile non-self or the" other".* The 1971 war was a decisive and resounding victory and broke Pakistan. It forcefully changed the map of South Asia and saw Indian nationalism truly come into its own. The Anglo-American combine saw India slipping out of its orbit and emerging as a power centre in its own right with the ability to influence outcomes in its backyard in a very decisive and dramatic manner. The atomic test of 1974 caught them by complete surprise. However, the first oil shock in 1973 had by then derailed the Indian political economy and made India vulnerable. The western intelligence agencies mounted a *concerted intelligence offensive to destabilise the Indira regime, which had, for the first time, exhibited true elements of autarky and autonomy and behaved like a strong regional power.*

A cornered Mrs Gandhi imposed the emergency and began to rely excessively on the goon brigade led by her inordinately ambitious younger son-Sanjay. The 1977 elections swept the centralist Congress Party out of power. The Janta regime,that the Gandhian style mass mobilisation of Jai Prakash Narain had thrown up, however, did not last very long and Mrs Gandhi returned to power. She was tragically assassinated in 1984 and her elder son Rajiv took charge. A moderniser and well meaning person, he tragically squandered the enormous goodwill with which he was elected with a record majority. There was a tragic second assassination. The second

oil shock in 1990-91 created another severe crisis in the Indian political economy. What followed was two decades of fractured mandates and weak coalition governments in Delhi which seemed increasingly incapable of defending Indian national interests. The idea of India came under serious assault once more, as Indian politics degenerated into fractured mobilisations based on the identity markers of caste and creed. The British had used precisely this formulation to destroy the very idea of India in the wake of the 1857 uprising.

This time around it was pygmy Indian politicians who were using the identity markers of caste and creed for highly segmented voter mobilisations. They had begun the destruction of the very idea of India. By 2014 therefore, the Indian nation was facing a deep systemic crisis. It was then that the massive political mobilisation by Modi and his BJP and RSS cadres led to a sudden upsurge of *right wing nationalism* especially in the Hindi heartland of India. This resurgence, swept Modi to power with a massive electoral mandate. India had voted for a decisive change and after two decades, a strong, centralised government had come to power in New Delhi. The year 2014 has indeed been a watershed year in recent Indian history. In more ways than one, it would perhaps, be India's year of destiny.

The Alternative Hypothesis

Today there is a dire need therefore, to analyse the last phase of the freedom struggle and examine the impact it had on the kind of polity that has emerged in India from that struggle. That is critical to understand our subsequent political history. The historical fact that is often overlooked is that freedom had most certainly not come as a result of the Congress Party's Non-Violent Quit India Movement. That had failed dismally and whimpered out by end 1942. Freedom came however, as a result of the shock treatment given by 60,000 strong Indian National Army (INA) of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose. According to the official history of the INA, about 26,000 of its soldiers had perished in the intense battles of Imphal-Kohima which were fought on Indian soil and in the subsequent retreat across Burma. The INA lost the battles but finally won the War for Indian Independence. This was the result of a very foolish post war gesture of triumphalism by the British masters. The British had put on trial 9 INA officers in the iconic Red Fort in Delhi, the final objective of the INA's march into India. As stated earlier, this calculated insult unleashed a wave of outrage in the whole of the country.

People were incensed. What is far more important however, was the large scale mutinies it triggered in the Royal Indian Navy. Over 20,000 soldiers and 78 ships were affected. There were mutinies also in the Royal Indian Air Force and some units of the British Indian Army. About 2.5 million Indian soldiers were then being demobilised after the war. They were combat-experienced and rather angry. The British panicked completely. Without the British Indian Army they could not have continued in India. They knew it was all over and they left within two years after the end of the war.

The parting shot of the British Empire however was not the grant of independence but the "*transfer of power*" to a coterie of Anglophile lawyers of the Congress led by Nehru and the partition of India. *Nehru ensured that the INA soldiers were not reabsorbed in the Indian Army. Till 1977, when the Janta Party came to power, they were denied their wartime pensions and virtually treated as traitors.* This was in sharp contrast to Pakistan where INA veterans were re-absorbed into the Pakistan Army.

Nehru now crafted a totally false Narrative of State that claimed India had won her independence only and solely by non-violent means. The use of force by the INA was obliterated from public memory. How a struggle where 26,000 INA soldiers were killed could be called non-violent, was never explained. Nehru now went to extra-ordinary lengths to burnish his myth of non-violence. He proclaimed himself a champion of world peace and wedded India to a doctrine of pacifism. India, he said, did not need armed forces. Police forces alone would be sufficient. Fortunately, in the initial stages, realists like Sardar Patel prevented Nehru from destroying the institutions such as the Armed Forces and utilised it to good effect to absorb the princely states and liberate Hyderabad as also save three fourths of Jammu and Kashmir. Patel had insisted on a direct interface with the military commanders in both these operations and that is precisely why they worked so well. Lord Ismay had left behind very workable command and control structures in the form of the Defence Committee of the Cabinet (DCC), where apart from the Ministers of Defence, Home and Foreign Affairs, the Service Chiefs were also in attendance and thus had a direct inter-face with their political masters. The synergy it generated was quite evident in the efficiency of the operations conducted. Unfortunately, Patel died very early in 1954. There was a coup in Pakistan during 1956-58 and Nehru used that excuse to completely marginalise the military, destroy its élan and professionalism, and starve it of resources and prestige. In the

process he weakened it fatally. *In fighting the ghosts of Bose's legacy of the INA's militant freedom struggle, Nehru virtually waged a war of attrition against his own armed forces*. In the bargain, he tragically weakened the new born state. In the quest for *a pliant and non-threatening military,* he and his Defence Minister, Krishna Menon weeded out all professionally competent and straight forward officers and deliberately fostered a coterie of relatives and incompetent yes-men.

The Onset of Realism

The disastrous results of this anti-military programme, were there for all to see in the military debacle of 1962. The Chinese humiliated India and taught us the continuing validity of the use of Force in International Relations. Nehru's elaborately constructed edifice of peace rhetoric and neutrality was demolished rather rudely. Nehru did not survive this shock and humiliation but his successors, fortunately, had learnt their lessons in realism. The problem however remains about the key question of the validity of the use of force in solving international disputes. Nehru had created a seriously distorted paradigm of state where his charisma and oratory alone were supposed to safeguard the state. The state, in his view, had absolutely no need for armed forces. Being a skilful lawyer, Nehru felt that he would forcefully represent India's case in the UNO (that had now replaced the British queen empress in the post-war scheme as the source of imperial justice and as per Nehru), now provided the new discourse of Imperial justice. Unfortunately, his legally trained mind failed to comprehend that the modern nation states that emerged in the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648 were premised on the monopoly of force and violence. Use of force has been and unfortunately still remains the last arbiter of disputes between nations and the sole monopoly of the use of force is said to vest with the state. *A state which refuses to accept the very legitimacy of the use of force to safeguard the territorial integrity and population of the nation-state, sadly undermines the very basis of its existence. Nehru's understanding of Geo-politics therefore was clouded by extreme liberalism and his penchant for pacifism*. He placed a highly exaggerated emphasis on neutrality and pacifism to secure the new born nation state. The simple fact is that Bose had a far clearer understanding of the geo-politics of that era in which the most devastating war had been fought between the nations of Europe. In such a dangerous context pacifism amounted to sheer escapism.

In neglecting the instruments of force, Nehru had seriously weakened the new Indian State. He had set the civilian bureaucracy and intelligence agencies at loggerheads with the armed forces and tasked them to keep the forces under check and wholly marginalised from decision-making. This has created a very distorted power structure as far as national security is concerned. In no other democracy are the Armed Forces so severely and completely marginalised from decision making. In the USA and UK, they interact directly with the highest political authority and play a very significant role in decision-making. The British tradition that we had inherited, accords the highest respect and authority to its armed forces. So also in the American democracy, the armed forces have played a very significant role. Almost 70 percent of American Presidents have come from a military background. In Nehru's India, the civilian bureaucracy's prime role was to marginalise the military and keep it in check. It was denied a direct interface with the political authority and pointedly starved of prestige and resources. The sustained insufficient provision of funds to the armed forces had tragic consequences in 1962. We learnt our bitter lessons, especially in the Indira Gandhi era, but the latent tensions between the civil and military establishments of the Indian state, have never really receded. They came back with full force with the UPA-II, where an Army Chief had to go to court and a Naval Chief was forced to resign. The Armed Forces were once again seriously starved of resources and their military modernisation process was tragically delayed.

That is the historic Nehruvian legacy we must take into account in any attempt to understand our nation's recent history and the debate on pacifism and the use of force, which actually goes back to the intra-Congress struggle between the Gandhi- Nehru camp and Bose. The basic debate was upon the very nature and strategy of the Freedom Struggle. This basal outlook of the Freedom Struggle was to colour our entire approach to our foreign and security policies in the post-independence era.

The Decision to Declassify

The INA Trust had tried its utmost to keep the memory of Netaji alive and along with members of the Bose family and several other organisations, had pressed successive governments to declassify the Bose files. This campaign reached a crescendo around mid 2015. I, along with several dedicated researchers of the Netaji mystery (Anuj Dhar, Chandrachud Gosh, Prof

Purabi Roy, Amalan Ghosh etc.) had gone around the country, speaking to the people and trying to create an awareness about this lost cause as it were. Our repeated forays to Kolkata did have a catalysing effect. The Mamata government in West Bengal apparently saw it as an electoral gambit by the Modi Government and it decided to pre-empt the BJP and steal the thunder as it were. Thus the West Bengal Govt declassified all 64 Netaji files in its custody in the month of October 15, 2015. This by itself clinched the issue and in turn put pressure on the Modi Government at the Centre to speed up the decision to declassify the files.

On October 14, 2015 the Prime Minister Mr Modi, invited the Bose family to meet him at 7 Race Course Road. The family was gracious enough to invite me to accompany them on their meeting with the Prime Minister. It was indeed an honour and I alongwith some of the dedicated researchers on the Bose mystery, accompanied them. The Home Minister and Foreign Ministers were already present. They had come fairly early. We tried to sound them but initially they were rather tight lipped and awaited the Prime Minister's arrival before saying anything about the decision or otherwise to declassify the files. Initially, there was tension in the air. What would be the outcome of this meeting? We were all fairly apprehensive. Then the Prime Minister strode in. One was struck by his sincerity of purpose and the genuine respect he displayed for the Bose family. After the round of speeches, he was forthright in his decision that "the truth must be told and the truth must be unearthed," he stated emphatically. "I and my Government are totally committed to this." To make sure the bureaucracy got his intent loud and clear, he laid down a deadline for this process. Beginning with January 23, 2016, Netaji's forthcoming birthday, the process of declassifying the files would commence. One was struck by his transparent sincerity and his genuine affection and respect for the Bose family. One of the Bose kin pointed out to him that files pertaining to Netaji's disappearance were available in Russia but they would be given only if our government approached them at the highest levels. The Prime Minister's response was forthright and spontaneous" I am visiting Russia in December and will most certainly take up the issue with them." He instructed the Foreign Minister to take this case up with the Russian authorities and inform them that he would be taking up this issue when he went there in December that year. We were all elated to hear the clear and unambiguous message delivered by the PM himself on the issue of the long pending de-classification of the Netaji

files. The disclosure process would start from January 2016. However, would that by itself, bring closure to this long pending issue?

There was the apprehension amongst some quarters that the crucial files/pages had been destroyed by the previous Congress regimes. There is also the apprehension that full closure would need inputs from the former Soviet Government records (now with Russia) as also those of the war time Japanese Governments as well as the MI-5 and MI-6 files of Britain. Where should we be looking and precisely for what? Recently, researchers have brought some more facts to light which give us a clear indication on where to look for what. It helps us to create plausible hypothesis about what really happened and in the light of these hypotheses, identify precisely what to look for in which archives. Otherwise it would be a random and misdirected search, that may not bring out the whole truth about the disappearance of Netaji.

Search Engines and Search Matrices

The Netaji files started tumbling out of the closet from January 23, 2016. The Prime Minister had also promised to take up the case with his Russian hosts in December 2015 when he visited that country. It is essential however that we gather the scattered bits of information now available to form a coherent construct of what could have happened and thereby search in a more focused manner through the forest of files. There are three broad theories about Netajis disappearance:-

- The Plane Crash theory
- The Soviet incarceration/Death theory (and its sub-variant that the British SOE assassinated him before he reached the USSR)
- The Gumnami Baba Survival theory.

The Plane Crash theory has been subjected to three Commissions of Enquiry already. The Mukherjee Commission has ruled it out categorically. The Gumnami Baba hypothesis has been well documented by some very dedicated and sincere researchers but DNA testing done as prescribed by the Mukherjee Commission refutes this theory. It could well be a clever ploy by Intelligence Agencies to soften the blow for the Indian people and give a benign burial to the Bose mystery.

The Soviet Hypothesis

That leaves the last one, Soviet hypothesis alone that needs methodical analysis and verification. For this, documentary evidence would have to be researched in India, Russia, Japan and UK to bring final closure. Surprisingly, even before the documents are fully declassified, some essential elements of information are already available in the open domain which provide strong clues that could guide the search process in a structured manner. The works of two American historians, Peter Fay and Joyce Chapman Lebra are critical for our search from the Soviet and Japanese angles to this great mystery. The works of these authors throw considerable light on some organisations and individuals that had a critical role to play in the disappearance of Netaji. Iqbal Malhotra's article in the Open magazine of November 15, 2015 sums up this research rather neatly. I had also written an article on this subject that was published by The Sunday Guardian (dated December 10, 2015), relevant details of which are reproduced below.

The Japanese Intelligence Organisation – Kempeitai

The Kempeitai was the Japanese Military Police organisation (like the German Gestapo and Schutzstaffel [SS]). It also performed Intelligence functions. It used to liaise with foreign Intelligence Agencies like the German Abwehr and Italian Servizio Informazioni Militare (SIM). It had both–Intelligence and Counter-Intelligence functions. By the end of World War-II, it had a strength of 36,000 and was the equivalent of NKVD. Prince Tsuneyoshi Takeda was the Supreme Chief of the Kempeitai in the Kwantung Army deployed in Manchuria. He was the first cousin of the Japanese Emperor Hirohito and hence carried considerable clout. The Kempeitai also worked through a host of ultra-nationalist Japanese Secret Societies like Black Dragon and Golden Lilly, which had a major role in Intelligence operations. It is believed that the Kempeitai played a very significant role in organising the disappearance of Bose and also in hiding the INA Treasure (War-chest).

Dramatis Personae

One of the Japanese officers who is thought to have played a key role in helping Bose to escape to Manchuria was Lt. Gen. Tsunamasa Shidei. He was a Russian speaking officer who had served in the Japanese Kwantung Army

in Manchuria from 1942-45. (He was its deputy chief and in fact was fluent in Russian, English and Japanese). Suddenly on May 23, 1945 (a week after the German surrender) and collapse of Japanese and INA forces in Burma, he was reassigned to the Burma theatre from Manchuria. There he served under Field Marshal Count Terauchi and interacted with Bose. Bose was then working on his post-war plans. Initially he had thought of staying on in Burma and waging a guerilla struggle from there against the British. He wanted to wage this guerilla war with the help of the Burmese National Army (BNA). The Japanese tried very hard to persuade him not to stay back in Burma. In fact the Japanese Gen. Heitaro Kimura who was in command of the Japanese forces in Burma had personally pleaded with him for three days not to stay on in that country. After the Japanese defeat in Burma, the BNA (Burmese National Army) had suddenly switched sides and had gone over to the British. This torpedoed the plans of INA to stay in Burma. Bose was forced to retreat from that country along with the withdrawing Japanese Armies. Chinese signal intercepts indicate that Bose had plans to move out of Burma by air and the British had possibly planned to shoot his plane down. The Japanese then asked him to extricate by the ground route to Thailand.

Around this time, Bose had begun to think in terms of escaping to the USSR and continue his struggle to free India now with Soviet help. There are reports that the INA did try and establish contact with the Russian Ambassador in Tokyo (Jacob Malik).In fact Netaji had written a letter to Malik the Soviet Ambassador in Tokyo. A copy of that letter was recently declassified by the KGB archives. There are contradictory reports available here. Kingshuk Nag writes that Netaji had probably sent his Minister Annad Sahay to contact the Soviet Ambassador in 1944. However he avers that the Japanese Foreign Minister Mamoru Shigemitsu had dissuaded Sahay from meeting him. In 1945 Sahay had again written to the Japanese Foreign Minister to facilitate a meeting with the Soviet Ambassador but was turned down again. Finally Bose's request to facilitate his contact with the Soviets was turned down by the Imperial General Head Quarters itself. Nag is of the view that Bose's escape to Manchuria was facilitated purely by Field Marshal Count Terauchi, the Japanese Southern Army Commander who had worked with Bose for over two years and had developed a deep personal regard for him. I'm not entirely convinced about this. Terauchi could not have issued direct orders to the Japanese Kawntung army in Manchuria to move its

deputy commander from Dairen to Singapore and back repeatedly, without the concurrence of the IGHQ in Tokyo. That Netaji had indeed written to Jacob Malik, stands confirmed with the release of that letter from the KGB archives now. A number of people in the Japanese high command were deeply impressed by Bose, the "Indian Samurai". They were anxious about the Soviet intentions towards them at the close of World War II. They were perhaps hopeful that the charismatic Bose may indeed facilitate a dialogue between them and the Soviets and soften the Soviet attitude towards Japan. The fact was peace between the two countries had held for almost the whole duration of the war and the peace pact had worked. The Japanese had not activated the eastern front and this had enabled the Soviets to withdraw about 700,000 troops from this front for use against the Germans. This gave hope to the Japanese that Bose may perhaps be useful as an emissary. Just then came the shock of the massive Soviet invasion of Manchuria. About 1.3 million Soviet forces were involved. About 80,000 Japanese and 12,000 Russian forces were killed in the Blitzkrieg that brought the Soviets within 50 miles of the Japanese island of Hokakaido. The Japanese were thoroughly alarmed. There is a view that it was not the atom bombs but the Soviet ground invasion in Manchuria that forced Japan to surrender. In that panic situation, playing the Bose card to reach out to the USSR became a very viable option. Once this larger Japanese interest was identified, it is quite likely that the Kempeitai Intelligence Agency was given charge of this complex operation to facilitate the escape and surrender of Bose to the Soviets and cover his escape by a deception operation that put out the narrative of an aircraft crash in which he had perished in Taiwan. The aircraft which ferried him from Saigon to Danang, Taihoku and Dairen in Manchuria was a Kampeitai aircraft modified for the induction of agents behind enemy lines.

So on June 30, 1945, Gen. Shidei was again sent back to the Kwangtung Army in Manchuria. Apparently his mission was related to the future plans of Bose in the post-war context. On August 17, 1945, therefore, we find him back again in Saigon, this time to welcome Bose on board the aircraft. It is safe to assume that he was there to escort Bose out of the Southern Theatre of war in Asia.

The Last Journey

Bose met the Japanese Southern Army Expeditionary Force Commander, Field Marshal Terauchi at Singapore. On August 16, 1945, Bose left Singapore for Bangkok in Thailand. Bose was presented two strong boxes with gold ornaments and treasure by the Indian Diaspora in Singapore (this was the day after the Japanese surrender). Bose left along with Maj. Gen. Sabino Isoda, the Japanese Liaison Officer with the INA and Colonel Habibur Rehman Bangkok for Saigon on August 17, 1945.

Bose boarded a Mitsubishi Ki-21 "Sally" the same day from Saigon. As stated, this was a medium bomber modified for deploying secret agents of the Kempeitai (Secret Police) of the Kwantung Armies. Lt. Gen. Shidei was on-board to welcome Bose. He had returned just 18 days after his departure from Burma for Manchuria. Just 8 days ago the Soviets had invaded Manchuria. Japan had surrendered on August 15, 1945. In all probability, Shidei had been having negotiations with the Russian SMERSH (military police cum intelligence organisation) to negotiate the surrender cum asylum for Bose and for himself.

There are indications that the Soviets were keen to get hold of the Kempeitai's Secret Unit 731, which had been conducting research on Biological and Chemical Warfare. Both the Americans and Soviets desperately wanted to get hold of this research data and scientists/technicians and hence Unit 731 was a major bargaining chip in any surrender negotiations. This unit had been led by Lt. Gen. Shino Ishii. He and a large part of his team had reportedly escaped to surrender to the Americans with the bulk of the scientific data on experiments which was conducted. Reportedly they were granted amnesty by Gen. MacArthur in exchange for this highly prized data.

The Kempeitai Bomber flight took off from Saigon around noon on August 17, 1945. It made a halt at Tourane (now Danang, the famous battlefield of the Vietnam War). This was just 90 minutes flying time from Saigon. So, why did the plane halt here? It was probably to unload the treasure, which would now be kept in safe custody of the Kempeitai. Surely, Bose was not going to take this treasure across the Soviet lines in Manchuria.

On August 18, 1945 at dawn, the plane took off, supposedly for Taihoku airfield in Taiwan. This incidentally, was the headquarters of the Kempeitai Naval Intelligence. The plane is said to have landed there around noon and after refuelling took off. It had barely climbed a 100 feet when the plane is

said to have caught fire and crash landed. The fact is there are no records of any such plane crash in that whole month in Taihoku. There are no records of four persons being cremated there also. The only record of a plane crash is a month later in October 1945 and involved an American plane ferrying back freed Prisoners of War. The fact is that the Japanese plane carrying Bose actually took off for Dairen in Manchuria, with Bose and Shidei, but without Colonel Rehman who was left behind to spread the story of the air crash. Taihoku, in fact was also a base of the naval wing of the Kampeitai, and hence was deliberately chosen to disseminate the deception theme of the air crash.

Situation in Dairen, Manchuria

So what was the situation in Dairen on August 18, 1945 when Bose is supposed to have landed there? The Soviet Army was knocking on the gates of this city after the swift blitzkrieg by Marshal Zhukov. Units of the SMERSH, the Soviet Military's Secret Police were already inside Dairen. They were in touch with the Kempeitai to broker a surrender of the Japanese forces and get their hands on the documents and data of Unit 731. Nag writes that in the Second World War, a large part of the Soviet administration had moved to Omnsk in Siberia to be out of reach of the advancing German Armies and Air Force (Luftwaffe). Bose had dispatched a representative to establish a Consulate in Omnsk of the Hakumate Arzi-Azad Hind (Provisional Govt of Free India).This representative (Kato Kaichu) had apparently gone without proper credentials. There is no record of Kato's true identity. Probably, he was an Indian with an assumed Japanese identity. In all probability Bose was ultimately headed for Omnsk in Siberia, where apparently the Free India Consulate had been established. The IB subsequently carried out detailed interrogation of the Japanese Interpreter who used to translate during Bose's meetings with the Japanese officers. He gave out details as to how Bose had strongly pleaded with the Japanese to facilitate his contact with the Soviets as it would mutually benefit both countries. Gen. Isoda, the new LO of the INA had also testified that Bose's plan was to head for Dairen in Manchuria to try and surrender to the Soviets. Only if that did not work out would he come to Tokyo to surrender to the Americans. There was no question of surrendering to the British.

SMERSH

A brief look at the Soviet SMERSH organisation would now be essential to piece together what could have happened. The SMERSH was set up in 1943 by the direct orders of Stalin to politically consolidate the territory captured by the Red Army. There were thousands of Russians in Manchuria, including Russian émigrés from the Tsar era. The SMERSH was headed by Victor Abakumov, who is said to have had a close, personal friendship with Stalin. Colonel Georgii Utekhin of the SMERSH was in Dairen. He was in charge of arresting all foreigners in areas secured by the Red Army. He reported directly to the SMERSH Chief. SMERSH operatives had convinced Gen. Otozo Yamada, Chief of the Japanese Kwantung Army in Manchuria to surrender along with the remaining staff of the notorious Unit 731. Most of its staff was later absorbed into the Soviet biological warfare facility at Sverdlovsk (Yekatarinburg, Ukraine). It is the Soviet SMERSH agency to which Bose and Shedei must have surrendered and disappeared behind the Iron Curtain forever.

The Fate of Bose

So what happened to Bose? In all probability, the Russian speaking Gen. Shidei had brokered a deal with the SMERSH for surrender of the Kwantung Army and intact capture of Unit 731 in return for amnesty and asylum for himself and Bose in the USSR. This is borne out by evidence that Shidei was never captured and tried for war crimes either by the USA or USSR. Along with Gen. Shidei, Bose must also have sought asylum in the USSR through SMERSH. Bose therefore simply disappeared within the folds of the Iron Curtain in the USSR. Since, as per the Allies, he was a war criminal (especially from the Anglo-US perspective) and India was a Crown Dominion until January 26, 1950, it made little sense for Bose to come in from the cold, even if he wanted to. Starting with Gen. Tojo, some six main leaders of the Japanese armed forces that he knew, had been hanged after the Tokyo war crime trials and many more sent to prison for life. Most of the convicted Generals of the Kwangtung Army in Manchuria were shipped in March 1950 to Camp Number 48 in the Lezhnevsky District in Siberia, some 50 kms from Suzdal in the Soviet Gulag.

In 1951, the SMERSH organisation was disbanded and its leadership purged. Both Viktor Abakumov and Colonel Georgii Utekhin were

executed. As a consequence, Bose and Gen. Shidei would have become unprotected assets of a disbanded Intelligence Organisation. In such circumstances, they would have been shipped out to the Soviet Gulag. Even more likely, they could have been simply executed as they were considered as inconvenient. That is the Iqbal Malhotra thesis. I do not buy this thesis entirely. From the latest flies declassified by the Indian Government in March 2016, it is apparent that Bose probably reached Omnsk in Siberia. He made three radio broadcasts on 31 meter band, on December 26, 1945, January 01, 1946 and in February 1946. Then there was a deafening silence. What happened after February 1946?

The Intelligence/Covert Operations Cooperation Treaties between UK and USSR

If Bose had reached Manchuria and surrendered to the Soviet SMERSH in Dairen would it have been so difficult for the US and British Intelligence to get to know about it? US Intelligence was already in contact with the Kempeitai for gaining access to the data of Unit 731. What is generally not so well known is that the Intelligence agencies of USSR and UK, the NKVD and MI-6 and SOE had signed two secret Intelligence Cooperation Agreements regarding cooperation in secret intelligence sharing and covert operations. As part of this, the British and American Intelligence agencies had shared top secret data from their code breaking machines about the Japanese and the German operational plans. The first Agreement had been signed in December 1941 in Moscow between NKVD and MI-6. The second protocol was signed between the two intelligence agencies on March 03, 1944 to coordinate global secret operations. This agreement had earlier been invoked by the British to try and prevent the escape of Bose from Berlin to the Far East by the air or land route over Russian territory. Did the British Intelligence invoke these Intelligence Sharing Agreements once again to seek custody of or gain access to Bose in the Soviet prisons? If yes, it starkly opens up the possibility of the extended torture of Bose for information and even his possible elimination at the British behest. *It would have been most convenient for the British to seek to interrogate Bose in Soviet prisons and get him executed there as it would avoid any repercussions or public outcry in India. The British did not at all want Bose back in India,* where there would certainly have been a massive outcry. So the best solution was to spread the canard that he had died in the air crash. That gave them the luxury of

interrogating him at length and then quietly having him done away with. Would the Soviets have cooperated with the British in this? In 1945, perhaps yes, because the two countries were still war time allies and the cold war was yet to begin. Besides the Soviets had never shown much enthusiasm in 1941 for granting asylum to Bose who had ultimately to go to Rome and then Berlin. This automatically made him *persona non grata* in the USSR as a perceived German collaborator. So there are strong possibilities that this, in fact, did happen. Only archival research in the right quarters can verify this. The point against this thesis is that if the British Intelligence had earlier portrayed him to the Soviets as their spy as part of a deliberate disinformation operation, could they now classify him as a rouge agent and war criminal? Did they approach the Soviets to hand him over? Did they, at the very least , seek Soviet permission to interrogate him in the Siberian prisons? Or did the British try and strengthen their dis-information operation and induce the Soviets to treat him as hostile and take strong action against him-(including executing him) or consigning him to the Gulag where, considering his delicate health (which had suffered immensely in British prisons in India) the very harshness of the cold and the forced labour would kill him.

Double Cross, MI-6 Disinformation Operation

Stalin was inordinately suspicious by nature. The German Abweher had fully exploited this trait to induce him to purge his best General Tukachevisky and hundreds of officers connected with him, just before the German attack in June 1941. Stalin suspected Tukachevisky (who was immensely popular with the troops) of plotting a coup against him. The Germans craftily prepared a file on this subject, had it stolen and then sold it to the NKVD for a huge price (possibly the highest amount paid for a document in intelligence operations). This doctored file had induced Stalin to unleash a bloody purge that eliminated some of his brightest and best officers just before the German attack. This was a disastrous decision and Russia had to pay a very heavy price in the opening stages of that conflict. Their forces were literally routed and the Germans reached the very gates of Moscow before they were halted finally and then painfully rolled back at stupendous cost in men and materials. Kingshuk Nag says in his recently released book, that the British MI-5 had apparently launched such a disinformation operation to discredit Bose in the eyes of the Soviets and make him out to be

one of their own spies. After all the man who had led Bose across the Afghan border was unfortunately, Bhagat Ram Talwar, a double agent working for both the MI-5 and NKVD. The Soviets knew Talwar to be a British agent and as such they were highly sceptical and suspicious about Bose and his bonafides. That is why they were so distinctly cool towards all his attempts to gain asylum in the Soviet Union. *Nag feels that this disinformation proved fatal for Bose when he finally surrendered to the Soviets in Manchuria at the end of the war. The Soviets were extremely suspicious of him and the British intelligence had very craftily fanned these suspicions.* Were these responsible for his incarceration in Siberia and possibly his ultimate execution? Or did Bose manage to survive?

Cherntsy Village Cemetery

So where did the journey of Bose, the greatest Indian patriot end? Iqbal Malhotra conjectures that there is a cemetery in Cherntsy village where the dead bodies were buried in separate sections for different years. This he says, is confirmed by laconic inscriptions on the concrete tomb stones. Were Bose and Gen. Shidei buried there? Is this the symmetry where the story ends? Or did he die unsung in the Gulag? Was he, as Nag conjectures, buried in that Highway of death in Siberia where the prisoners who died of exhaustion or cold were interred along the Kolyama highway that leads out of Yakutsk to the west towards Moscow? The inmates of the Gulags called it the "road of bones".

The Search Engine

The complete records of all these events in the former USSR and Japanese Manchuria will not possibly be there in the Indian Archives. India, therefore, needs to urgently do the following to unravel the Bose mystery. In specific we need to:

- Petition the Japanese Government for access to the Kwantung Army and Kempeitai's records;
- Petition the Russian Government for access to the records of the SMERSH during the "Manchurian Strategic Operation" Offensive;
- Send a team to village Cherntsy in Lazhnevsky District in Russia to explore Camp No. 48, its records and its cemetery;

- Petition the British and American Governments for records of the MI-5/MI-6 and American OSS on Netaji.

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Historical Context of the Freedom Struggle, the Military Revolts of 1857 and 1946

There are three things standing in the way of way of a revival of India which we must first overcome, the caste system, corruption, and the proliferation of religion in other than personal life.

– Subhash Chandra Bose

"If the British Empire had to survive in India… it had to destroy and dismantle all sources of Indian unity and identity, cultural, political and historical; and render the very idea of India as meaningless. ..Torn by internal conflict, it was claimed that India was in desperate need of a neutral and impartial power at the helm of the state to secure justice and order (or justice as order). Given that Indian society was deeply divided into communities in conflict with each other, only an alien, foreign power could be trusted to be neutral and impartial".

– Dr. Mithi Mukherjee

"India in the Shadows of Empire: A Legal and Political History"

"*The mutiny was in great measure put down by turning the races of India against each other. So long as this can be done, the government of India from England is possible. But, if this were to*

change and should the population be moulded into a single nationality, we would have to leave."

– Sir John Seely

India has been unified only thrice in its history of over five millenniums. These were the unifications effected by the three great empires in history, the Mauryan Empire, the Mughal Empire and finally, the British Empire. The present Indian Republic is the successor entity of the British Empire. The reputed German historians Herman Kulke and Dietmar Rothermund have cited the non-revolutionary and smooth transfer of power as enabling the Indian Republic to continue seamlessly, with the institutions fashioned by the British Empire like the armed forces, the civil bureaucracy and the police and intelligence services.

The somewhat disconcerting historical fact however, is that the British did not grant independence to India in 1947. They carried out a *"transfer of power"* to an Anglophile coterie of lawyers in the Indian National Congress led by Nehru. For the first three years India remained a Dominion of the Empire and became a Republic only in 1950. In hindsight, we can see that its autonomy and autarky remained subject to *subtle controls and constraints created by an Intelligence service and civil bureaucracy that surprisingly retained elements of loyalty to the Raj which had given them their privileged positions*. Dr. Mithi Mukherjee of the University of Colorado, has, in her very original and path-breaking book *"India in the Shadows of Empire: A Legal and Political History"* has thrown new light on the Indian Freedom Struggle. Her book links the colonial and post-colonial periods of Indian History into a seamless narrative; and thereby provides a radically new overview on the emergence of India as a modern nation state. To understand the current Indian politics therefore, we must understand our recent history.

The 1857 Uprising

Aurangzeb had destroyed the secular consensus on which Akbar had built and then taken the Mughal Empire to such great heights. He had monetised the economy on the silver standard and rationalised the taxation regime. He had established matrimonial alliances with the Rajput Princes and co-opted some of them as Generals in the Mughal Army. Aurangzeb however; re-introduced the hated Jazia tax and intensified persecution of the Hindus and

Sikhs. He completely unravelled the secular consensus put in place by Akbar (who had called India his Homeland). This led to the revolts of the Sikhs, the Marathas and the Ahoms in Assam. These revolts had torn apart the Mughal Empire, well before the British established their sway. Into this vacuum, the British East India Company stepped in innocuously. It recruited Indian sepoys; drilled them on European lines and soon created a cost-effective Infantry based Army that helped it conquer virtually the whole of India, starting from the three coastal bridgeheads of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras. The East India Company was a commercial and mercantile enterprise and intent not upon good governance but the systematic loot of the colonised land and its people. It was also characterised by racial arrogance and deeply ingrained white supremacy attitudes. They destroyed the local crafts and industry to push their mass manufactured products. They cut off the hands of the weavers who used to weave the very fine muslin cloth of Dhaka. Later they forced the locals to cultivate opium for sale to China. Cumulatively, these actions spread great resentment and outrage which finally resulted in the great mutiny of 1857 amongst the sepoy ranks of East India Company's Presidency Armies. The spark was provided by the prosletysation efforts and the introduction of greased cartridges said to be dipped in cows and pigs fat. This spark soon mutated into a major popular uprising all over North India. Over a period of time, about 80,000 Indian soldiers rebelled. Had they all rebelled together or had they had a competent leadership, the British Empire in India would have come to a swift and inglorious end. The British however quelled this uprising with brutal force, but it shook them to their roots. The British subsequently declared the Poorbaiya (Eastern) troops of UP, Bihar and Bengal, with the help of which they had conquered the bulk of India, as non-martial and stopped their recruitment into the British Indian Army. The entire recruiting bias was shifted to the Punjab, to the Sikh and Punjabi Musalman troops who had largely remained loyal to the Raj. Also a large number of Gurkha and hill troops regiments, like Kumaonis, Gharwalis and Dogras were now recruited to keep the people of the Indo-Gangetic plains under check. The new Indian Army was raised on segmented ethnic lines to ensure that they would never subscribe to the idea of India. Their primary attempt thereafter was to sanitise their British Indian Army and ensure that it remained loyal to the Raj. That is why its entire recruitment focus was diverted to the Punjab and the Hill tribes (Gurkhas, Gharwalis, and Kumaonis). The heavy

emphasis on a Regimental System of motivation served the colonial design of accentuating local, ethnic and linguistic identities and preventing the crystallisation of a 'Pan-Indian' identity that the nationalists were so desperately trying to forge. The only flaw in this thesis was that in times of war and rapid expansion (as in the two wars) this narrow manpower base of the martial-classes completely broke down and had to be supplemented by recruiting thousands of soldiers from clans and castes declared non-martial by the British. Thus in these wars the British were forced to recruit the Mazhbi Sikhs, Mahars and Biharis etc.

British Divide and Rule Policies, Post 1857

This massive uprising eroded the carefully maintained façade that the Company ruled on behalf of the weak Mughal Emperor. Dr. Mithi Mukherjee writes In the Shadow of Empire, "the revolt underlined that significant parts of the Indian population, though seemingly hostile to one another, were capable of uniting against colonial rule. Force by itself would not suffice to maintain the empire. *If the British Empire had to survive in India, it had to find a way to overcome its foreignness as a source of provocation for future uprisings. It had, even more importantly, to destroy and dismantle all sources of Indian unity and identity–cultural, political and historical; and render the very idea of India as meaningless.*" She continues, "Torn by internal conflict, it was claimed that *India was in desperate need of a neutral and impartial power at the helm of the state to secure justice and order (or justice as order).* Given that Indian society was deeply divided into communities in conflict with each other, *only an alien, foreign power could be trusted to be neutral and impartial.*" Thus was the ideological basis laid for persistent foreign rule in India that lasted two centuries. The concept of Imperial Justice was specifically created to justify foreign rule in a deeply divided and fractured Indian society. Dr. Mithi Mukherjee writes, "*For India to have any order and unity, the state would have to be exterior to the civil society and nation.* It was this intervention of the discourse of Imperial Justice, coupled with state's representation of India as a deeply divided society that tried to turn the exteriority and foreign origin of the colonial state into its greatest strength, rather than a weakness."

Thus came into being the *British imperial discourse of justice as equity*. Only a foreign and extrinsic power could deal impartially with the many warring sections of a deeply divided Indian society. Hence foreign rule was

needed simply because Indian polity was so deeply fractured and incapable of governing itself. Only an external power could have enforced justice between communities.

Splintering India, The Colonial Construction of Caste

The primary aim of colonial rule therefore was to deeply fracture the Indian polity and exploit every cultural, religious, ethnic and linguistic faultline in its society. One such colonial tool was the accentuation of caste in Indian society. *This was done by the British through the mechanism of Caste-based Census of the Indian population.* Mukherjee writes, "The British ratified caste by means of various colonial instruments such as district manuals, Gazettes, imperial surveys and finally the Census of 1872 and made *Varna*, the hierarchial ordering of castes into four groups as the central idea behind classification of Indian society." She adds, "*The census administration was driven by the ideological need to naturalize the absence of national unity and then institutionalize it by integrating it into routine administrative decisions and policies.*"

Sir John Seeley, the author of the first census wrote, "The mutiny was in great measure put down by *turning the races of India against each other*. So long as this can be done, the government of India from England is possible. But, if this were to change and *should the population be moulded into a single nationality, we would have to leave*." Risley rubbed it in further by saying, "Indians do not have the capacity to develop an idea of nationality, let alone rule themselves." He ascribed it primarily to the institution of caste. "*So long as a regime of castes persists, it is difficult to see how the sentiments of unity and solidarity can penetrate and inspire all classes of the community.*"

This polarisation of caste was begun as the pursuit of social justice and was the primary colonial mechanism for splintering and dividing the Indian population, of which the Hindus then constituted about 80 percent.

Community based Electorates

Subsequently the colonial administration tried to deepen these social cleavages and fault-lines, by instituting separate electorates based upon religion and caste. Thus the Muslims were the first to get a separate electorate and then the Christians, the Sikhs and also the Subaltern Castes

(Dalits). Risley was a great proponent for separate electorates based upon religion and caste to thoroughly divide the Indian population.

As a counterpoise the primary effort of the subsequent nationalist movement in India was to craft a pan-Indian identity, beyond the pale of religion, community, language and caste. This sense of unity was strengthened by the mass mobilisation of Gandhi's freedom movement and persisted for a time even in the initial Nehruvian phase. The great pity is, that post independence, politics in India sought to revive the divisions and faultlines of caste and creed as a primary mechanism for mobilising voters. To secure narrow vote banks, based on promises of affirmative action for select caste groups, the Indian elections were turned into a referendum of segmented mobilisations based on caste. This segmented mobilisation created a virtual 'communism of caste' that militated against merit and equity, and deeply splintered the Indian psyche once more in the post-colonial period.

The Freedom Movement

The surprising fact about the freedom movement in India was that its leadership was predominantly composed of lawyers. They strongly supported the British colonial concept of imperial justice as equity. They did not consider freedom a right but a privilege that the British imperial monarch would gift to her subjects. Such an attitude stems *from the a priori acceptance that Indian society was hopelessly divided and at war with itself. As such the ends of justice demanded that an extrinsic power enforce justice in an impartial and detached manner.* India had to be ruled from without. Foreign rule was the only antidote to India's innate divisions and fragmentations. Their mode of seeking *"Home Rule"* from the British was entirely premised upon pleading and petitioning the imperial monarch for justice against the colonial administration. The Freedom Movement was begun by this Anglophile club of Indian lawyers, petitioning and pleading the monarch as a small group of educated elite, trying to plead on behalf of the subject Indian people. Their goal was home rule and they could never envision the idea of complete freedom.

The British success *in completely splintering the Indian population was evident during the years of the First World War, when there was no rebellion in India even as the bulk of the British Indian Army was deployed overseas.* British Intelligence (the highly professional IB) had thoroughly penetrated

the Ghadar Movement of revolutionaries based in Canada and USA and foiled all their ambitious plots to stir an uprising in India during the war. A branch of the Ghadarites had planned to march to India via the East (as the INA would do during the Second World War). India had contributed about 1.3 million Indian soldiers and 146 million pounds to the war effort. About72,000 Indian soldiers laid down their lives and 11 received the Victoria Cross–the highest gallantry award in the empire.

Service in such large Armies has a homogenising impact and it somehow revived the moribund idea of India. These troops served overseas as part of the British Indian Army. They were organised in Indian divisions. They fought as equals and were lionised in Europe. They heard the slogans of liberty, fraternity and equality and saw their colonial masters in dire straits in the trenches of France and Flanders. They fought and prevailed against the European soldiers (Germans, Austrians and Turks). It was a transformative experience for about 1.3 million troops from the Punjab and Northern parts of India. The least, they expected from the British at the end of this war, was gratitude and perhaps some form of home rule. The response was one of callous racism. In 1919, what they got was the massacre of Jallianwalah Bagh.

The Second Strand of the Freedom Struggle, Gandhian Non-Violence

It was Gandhi who plugged into the deep sense of outrage amongst the Indian people. He took charge of the Congress and turned it into a genuine instrument of mass based but passive resistance. He mobilised the rural masses of India and banned practicing lawyers from joining the non-cooperation movement launched in 1920. He broke free from the lawyers' discourse of pleading and petitioning the imperial monarch for home rule. He asked for genuine freedom or "*Poorna Swarajya*". He turned the non-cooperation movement into a mass-based mobilisation that went out of the towns and mobilised the Indian peasantry. This really electrified the nation. As in Mao's China, the nationalist movement was now based not on the industrial proletariat in the cities and towns but upon the peasants in the country side. Gandhi sought to subsume religious differences by espousing the Muslim causes of the Khilafat, etc. However, he kept the movement strictly non-violent and propagated a renunciative form of freedom, so much more in tune with the traditional Indian concepts of *Moksha* and *Nirvana*, that went beyond identity *per se* into the amorphous universality of

the Brahman, as it were. This mass mobilisation was highly successful in reaching out to the Indian masses and deepening the idea of India. Gandhi however, kept insisting that the movement be kept non-violent. It appears that the British Administration felt at a point of time, that this non-violent resistance would not pose a decisive threat to British rule in India. They could, they felt, have easily contained this non-violent movement and therefore, they even tacitly encouraged it, by permitting it to gain a high media profile amongst the print and radio mediums of that period. They were understandably keen that the struggle for Indian Independence should not turn violent and grim. 1857, was their enduring civilisational nightmare and they did not want any replay or repetition. It is now evident from hindsight, that the British tacitly encouraged this non-violent, persuasive form of protest because they were convinced that it was not going to basically endanger their colonial rule. The extensive press coverage given to Mahatma Gandhi and his non-violent freedom movement based on peaceful demonstrations, fasts and *dharnas*, was designed to release the pent up energy of popular dissatisfaction with colonial rule but at the same time, prevent it from turning very violent. That violence would have endangered the colonial dispensation. Non-violence did not, and hence it was tolerated. It only served to establish the liberal credentials of British rule, its levels of enlightenment and actually reinforced its legitimacy to rule a very heterogeneous population where the natives, they averred were not capable of ruling themselves.

So even while the Congress tom-tommed its nationalist credentials and abhorrence for colonial rule, they openly admired the British system and were in turn seen by the colonial masters as "Brown Sahibs" and closet Anglophiles in a nationalist disguise *who were very convenient tools for the perpetuation of the Raj*. In the racial terms of that era–they were WOGs (an acronym for Western Oriented Gentlemen). In fact however, wogs was the second half of "Golliwogs", a pejorative racial term of abuse which meant a black Doll. These non-violent protests therefore, acted as a safety valve for the popular sentiments and prevented the outbreak of large scale violence in India.

The Third Strand of the Freedom Struggle, Violence of Bose and his Indian National Army (INA)

The third strand in the Indian movement for independence was led by Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose and his INA and the earlier revolutionaries like Bhagat Singh, Chandrashekhar Azad, Rajguru, etc. Bose was convinced that non-violence was completely within the tolerance thresholds of the Empire. He very correctly identified the loyalty of Indian sepoys as the Key Centre of Gravity of the Colonial Empire. The only Indian in the National Congress who could really challenge the overriding authority of the Mahatma, was Subhash Chandra Bose. He was a realist. He clearly foresaw that non-violence was absolutely within the tolerance thresholds of the colonial regime. This could mount media and psychological pressure but never of an order which would really compel the British to leave. After the First World War, the demobilised 1.2 million strong body of the native Indian soldiers of the British Indian Army had really spread the ideas of nationalism in India especially into the villages and countryside from which the peasant soldiers came. Gandhiji had harvested this into a mass movement but carefully directed it into non-violent channels that would not strain the tolerance thresholds of the Empire and only add to its feel good factor of being a liberal regime, open to public pressure and persuasion–but only upto a point. That point stopped well short of complete independence for India.

World War-II had started in 1939. India had contributed a staggering 2.5 million men–the largest all-volunteer Army in the history of the world, an Army raised without conscription. Unwittingly, it was this that really deepened the idea of India. Once again large corporate bodies of Indian soldiers fought overseas as Indian divisions, thus unwittingly strengthening the idea of India as a pan-Indian identity beyond the narrow confines of caste and creed. The steady Indianisation of the officers' corps deepened this idea of India even further and also sharpened the bitterness against racism in the ranks of the Army and its officers' messes and clubs. Gymkhana and other upper crust clubs in India in those days, had boards at the entrance which proclaimed, "Indians and dogs not allowed". It was this racism that would cost the British their empire. Bose differed radically from Gandhi. For him, the war presented a golden opportunity to reach out to the enemies of Britain, to Germany and Japan and seek their help to free India. Gandhi opposed this realist mode of thought. Bose was completely marginalised in the Congress. Gandhi ensured that he did not become President of the Congress for a second term. Single-handedly however, he escaped to

Germany and there raised the Indische Legion (Indian League) a brigade size force formed from the Indian Prisoners of War. He was dismayed however by Hitler's racism. Meanwhile the Japanese had gained spectacular success in the Asia-Pacific theatre. They had raised an Indian National Army from the Prisoners of War they held. They were having problems managing it and they wanted the Germans to send Bose. The Germans took 13 long months to transfer him. Finally, Bose undertook a perilous voyage by sea in a German U boat. Off the course of Madagascar, Bose was transferred to a Japanese submarine and reached Japan. He deeply impressed Prime Minister Tojo and the top Japanese leadership with his transparent sincerity. He established the Provisional Government of Azad Hind and declared war on Britain. He expanded the INA to a respectable size of 1,500 officers and 60,000 men and organized them in three divisions. About 26,000 of these men perished in the battles of Imphal and Kohima and the subsequent retreat from Burma. The INA lost the battles but won the War for Independence. After the war, in a misplaced gesture of triumphalism, the British put on trial 9 INA officers at the iconic Red Fort of Delhi. The intent was to rub salt into the Indian wounds. It enraged the people of India. Worse, it triggered widespread mutinies in the Royal Indian Navy, the Royal Indian Air Force and many units of the British Indian Army. The British were truly shaken. About 2.5 million men of the British Indian Army were then being demobilised after World War-II and they were angry and enraged. The British saw the writing on the wall. Their white troops were tired, war-weary and homesick. They had no will to fight against about 2.5 million armed men of the Indian Army or large parts thereof. They decided to quit with grace and left within two years after the end of World War-II. The sun had finally set on the British Empire.

Thus, what had brought about the end of the empire really were the INA and Indian Armed Forces. The First War of Independence was fought by the Indian soldiers of the Presidency Armies in 1857. The British had gone all out to fragment the Indian society thereafter. It was the mass mobilisations during World War-I and World War-II that coincidentally reinforced the idea of India through the mammoth British Indian Armed Forces that were raised to fight overseas wars as an organisational entity that was Indian in essence. The Indian Army numbered 1.3 million in the First World War and a staggering 2.5 million in the Second World War. It is my contention that these mammoth, pan-Indian organisations revived the historical idea of

India and unwittingly, nurtured the trampled Indian identity. The first step towards nation building is to raise a strong national armed forces to protect that state and give it the monopoly of violence. The British unwittingly prompted the impulse towards nationalism by raising these huge National Armed Forces as corporate entities with a life and sub-culture of their own. It was these armed forces in the end that offered violent resistance to the colonial rule and forced the British to leave. The INA played a pivotal role and was instrumental in getting India freedom. The sacrifice of 26,000 men (or even lesser but significant numbers) cannot be termed as a non-violent struggle. The very example of these men, who fought as Indians to free India, resuscitated the dying idea of India and virtually caused a second revolt in the Indian Armed Forces. It was this impending second revolt that caused the Empire to unravel. Bose and his INA had managed to shake the loyalty of the Indian soldiers towards the Raj and this was a major feat. The central idea of the Bose thesis was to subvert and transform the organisational culture of these vast all volunteer Armed forces that the British had raised in India and turn it as the primary instruments of British subversion and control against them.

The wily British had seen the writing on the wall. They left, but before that, they cleverly 'transferred power' to the anglophile coterie of lawyers in the Nehru-led Congress. These lawyers soon marginalised Gandhi and buried Bose. They revived the discourse of imperial justice by adopting the British India Act of 1935 virtually as our Constitution and enshrined *justice* as the most important ideal of the Constitution. Mukherjee says, "*these lawyers made justice the basic foundation of the Indian Constitution*. The other instrument of Imperial Justice and the Imperial Monarch, soon manifested itself in the dynastic leadership of the Congress, now represented by the Nehru-Gandhi family, which continued to be a powerful force in Indian politics till 2014, when it was decimated in the recent Parliamentary Elections.

Once, the British had left, the Congress by sheer force of the habit of the discourse of imperial justice as equity, slowly had begun to elevate one of their own, Jawaharlal Nehru, to occupy the imperial position of monarch as imperial judge. Parliament (largely the Congress), now configured itself as a court of equity centred on Nehru as the new monarch. The emergence of the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty was a derivative of the British discourse of justice as equity. Nehru, the agnostic, was the secular monarch of this state, yet stood

aloof and apart, as its new, extrinsic monarch to give justice to its perpetually warring communities and castes.

The Nehruvian Narrative of State

From the point of view of national security, Nehru now crafted a deliberate Narrative of State for India. The entire effort was centred upon the quest for gaining political legitimacy as the genuine liberators of India. It was clear that the pacifism of Gandhi-Nehru faction of the Congress had failed to evict the British. This had been done by Bose, the INA and the violent mutinies they had instigated in the armed forces. This violent legacy had to be strenuously denied. To downplay the violent resistance of INA and the revolt of the Indian Armed Forces that had finally secured independence, Nehru propagated the patent falsehood that India had secured her independence entirely by non-violent means and methods. As such, force, he felt, had no role to play whatsoever in the birth and establishment of the Indian Republic. Nehru claimed that amongst the entire comity of Westphalian nation states (based on the sole monopoly of violence), India was an exceptional state as it was not based on hard power but the soft power of *Ahimsa, Satyagraha, Non-violence, etc.* This was patently incorrect as it refused to factor in the pivotal role of the INA and the subsequent mutinies it had instigated in the British Indian Armed Forces. Nevertheless, in his bid to marginalise Bose, Nehru strenuously built up this narrative of state and went to inordinate lengths to ingrain it in the national psyche. In keeping with the Indian state's allegedly pacific origins, Nehru went to inordinate lengths. He claimed that India did not need Armed Forces and only police forces would suffice. He refused to rehabilitate the INA personnel and denied them their wartime pensions. Nehru thus created a paradox. All Westphalian nation states are based on a monopoly of hard power. Disputes between nations are still resolved by the use of force. As a lawyer, Nehru now elevated the imperial concept of justice and ascribed its preservation to the newly formed United Nations Organisation (UNO) and felt that it would need lawyers like him to plead and petition to the new Global Body of supra-national justice. Armed Forces had no role whatsoever. It was only the Congress realists like Patel who prevented him from damaging and disbanding these inherited institutions. In any case, India had to threaten the use of force to make the princely states accede to the Union of India, and make India a cohesive and contiguous state and not

a quilt patchwork of local fiefdoms. Patel threatened to march in the Indian Army into any princely state that refused to accede to India. The princes saw the writing on the wall and caved in tamely. It was Patel's assertive use of the instruments of military Force that really served to unify India and make it a cohesive and governable entity.

The Post Independence Narrative

The immediate challenges to India came in Jammu and Kashmir and Hyderabad and in both Patel marched in the Army despite Nehru's reservations and Hamlet like indecision. Nehru subsequently tried to assert himself and took the case of Kashmir to the UNO. It was a disastrous decision and India is still paying for that folly. Patel unfortunately died early and Nehru soon had his way. Nehru arrogated to himself the role of peacemaker of the planet. This construct was initially fashionable in a war-weary world and for a time allowed India to punch much above her weight in the various world fora. Neutrality was elevated to the level of dogma in terms of Non-Alignment. India sent peace keeping missions to all conflict spots of the world. India adopted a highly preachy and moralist tone in its international discourse as it touted the values of *Ahimsa* and *Satyagraha* to an increasingly violent world. Nehru ensconced himself as the new global messiah of peace and non-violence

In 1956, there was a military coup in Pakistan. This made Nehru paranoid. He now completely marginalised the military and used the bureaucracy and Intelligence services to cut it to size. Its Generals were pushed down in the order of precedence and marginalised from all decision-making process. Nehru treated the military contemptuously, as the last outpost of the Raj and tried to tame it by eroding its professionalism and promoting sycophants and relations to key positions. Worst of all, he completely starved it of resources. India reduced its defence expenditure to just around one per cent of its GDP. This soft power mindset led to the disaster of 1962 when China taught India a humiliating lesson in real politic. Nehru turned hysterical and sought western military intervention. It was only a tactical defeat but *the spectacle of collapse in the soft state was most unedifying and disgraceful. Nehru, with his inordinate emphasis on soft power, had created a very weak state, incapable of defending itself or using military force to effect critical outcomes in terms of national security.* Such weakness could imperil its independent existence. *It was a state that deliberately chose*

not to think in strategical or National security terms. The initial defence of the India-China border was assigned to the Police forces and the attempt was to *build the Police as some sort of counterpoise to the untrustworthy military.*

The Onset of Realism

The 1962 debacle did occasion a significant course correction in India. Nehru died heartbroken but his successors had learnt a bitter lesson in realism. The Indian Armed Forces were rapidly expanded and modernised. The 1965 War caught them half way in their modernisation process. However it did give them very valuable hands-on professional experience. Russia stepped in, in a major way thereafter, to subsidise the Indian military buildup. They provided India the cutting edge military technology for that era. By 1971, India had arrived as a strong regional power. It broke Pakistan into two and formed a new nation state with the force of arms. The Bangladesh war was a decisive tri-service blitzkrieg that saw a march on an enemy capital, mass surrender of armies (93,000 Prisoners of War) and enforced regime change. For the first time after the Second World War, a new nation had been created by the force of arms. By 1974 Indira Gandhi had tested a nuclear weapon. The first oil shock of 1973 however had derailed the Indian political economy and eroded Indira Gandhi's political legitimacy. A Gandhian mass movement was unleashed against her by Jai Prakash Narayan (JP). Dr. Mukherjee says that the Congress' attempt to make an imperial monarch out of its leadership, in the form of Nehru-Gandhi dynasty, was now countered by the second strain of the Freedom Movement, Gandhian mass mobilisation. In the face of this mass movement led by a Gandhian, Jai Prakash Narain, Indira Gandhi panicked. Goaded by her inordinately ambitious younger son, Sanjay, she imposed the highly unpopular national emergency. This saw the rout of Smt Indira Gandhi in the 1977 Parliamentary Elections. However, the neo-Gandhian dispensation that followed was a weak and motley coalition that unravelled within two years.

Indira Gandhi returned to power and with Soviet assistance, greatly strengthened the Indian Armed Forces. She was an ardent nationalist and had used Pakistan as the *hostile other* to generate a nationalist consolidation. The western powers felt threatened by her muscular nationalism. The Afghan War had started and Pakistan had become a key frontline state for the CIA's jihad against the Soviet Army. The Sikh terrorist movement for

Khalistan was instigated in the Punjab state, to keep India pre-occupied and enable Pakistan's Army to focus on Afghanistan. All the communities that had been given separate electorates by the British, to give salience to their separate identities, were fully exploited in the post-colonial phase by the foreign intelligence organisations to instigate insurgencies/local rebellions in India. Indira Gandhi was a charismatic and nationalist leader who was making India a strong regional power with growing ambitions. The west was distinctly unhappy with her muscular brand of nationalism. They were alarmed over the ruthless way in which she had broken Pakistan in two and then exploded a peaceful nuclear device. It is no secret that in the 1980s Indira Gandhi was spoiling for a fight with Pakistan to pay it back for instigating terror in the Punjab.

Indira Gandhi was assassinated on October 31, 1984. Her tech-savvy elder son, Rajiv Gandhi took over with a massive sympathy mandate, but soon frittered it away pandering to all manner of pressure groups. The Nehru-Gandhi dynasty as an imperial- monarchial surrogacy institution was fast losing steam. Rajiv Gandhi was assassinated on May 22, 1992 and India now stepped into an era of weak and unstable coalition governments based on the fractured mandates of identity politics. The Bharatiya Janata Party now started a Hindu majoritarian mobilisation with the Ayodhya Ram Temple movement. To counter it, the then Prime Minister, V.P. Singh took a leaf straight out of the colonial armoury of divisive instruments. He dusted out caste to deeply fracture and splinter the Hindu community and prevent its consolidation as a vote bank. *He justified it as the sole way to promote justice between castes and creeds and thereby secure secularism*. The social justice card of the colonial era was now taken out by the political leadership of post-colonial India, and a second fracturing programme to splinter the pan-Indian identity was now unleashed after 1857, this time by the *Indians themselves*. The entire state machinery was pressed in to sharpen caste identities and promise indiscriminate affirmative action on the basis of caste and creed markers. Economic price tags were now put on identity markers now by the device of reservation. In a bizarre move, 50 percent of the Indian population was brought into the ambit of caste-based reservations. The entire nationalist project of the freedom struggle, to carve out a pan-Indian identity beyond caste and creed was thus virtually destroyed.

Identity Politics

What followed thereafter was an era of most petty, identity-based politics based on caste-mobilisation of a degree that would have left the British colonial regime envious. India outdid her former colonial masters in fracturing and splintering itself and descending into the tribalism of caste. Romila Thapar, a prime courtier of the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty, emerged as the chief theoretician of this new ideology of social justice and equity based on the politics of caste. This Queen of caste proclaimed that there was no religion like Hinduism, only a conglomeration of *jatis* and castes. To prevent a consolidation of the majority of the Indian population, the colonial card of caste had been invoked with a splintering intent that was odious and surprising in the lengths to which its proponents were prepared to go. The second Oil Shock of 1990 meanwhile completely derailed the Indian economy. The then Prime Minister, P.V. Narsimha Rao was forced to rapidly liberalise the Indian economy and dismantle the licence–permit Raj to enable the private sector in India to take its economy to the next level. This unleashed the entrepreneurial energies of India's corporate sector. This was also the stage in which the Ayodhya Ram temple agitation peaked. It was the BJPs counter to the bid to fracture the Hindu vote along the fault-lines of caste and somehow consolidate a majoritarian vote bank to counter the use of the minorities as a captive vote bank.

Dowager Empress

Sonia Gandhi, the Italian widow of Rajiv Gandhi, was now cast into the role of the new Dowager Empress of India. The justice as equity discourse of the colonial era was revived with a new fervour. Only a white-skinned foreigner could be impartial and neutral in the squabbles between India's multiplicity of castes and creeds. Sonia was now elevated to the status of the new queen empress of the Congress and thereby of India *per se*. Congress won the elections and Manmohan Singh was made the figure-head Prime Minister to administer the state on Sonia's behalf. Sonia as the President of the Congress was the real monarch and thus a diarchy form of government with dual power centres came into being in New Delhi. Sonia's National Advisory Council (NAC) of Leftist-Liberal intellectuals goaded her to policies that would keep the bulk of Indians hopelessly poor and dependent solely on the doles and freebies tossed by the new Empress of India. India had revived the colonial discourse with a new vehemence that was astonishing. How could a free nation regress so thoroughly to the colonial modes of governance? This

unleashed a tyranny of short-term agendas, based on buying captive vote-banks through freebies, doles and targeted affirmative action based on caste/identity markers. Accentuating these tendencies were Sonia's possible subterranean support to agendas of proselytization aimed at converting large segments of the neglected tribal populations, who were consciously prevented from modernising and entering the national mainstream. This spate of freebies coupled with the Oil Shock of 2013 derailed the Indian economy once again for the third time in succession much on the lines that a profligate welfare state had derailed the Greek economy.

The two competing ideologies in India were the discourse of social justice as equity with a foreign national as Queen Empress or Monarch–the impartial outsider, ensuring justice and equity between the perpetually warring castes and creeds and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on the other hand, which was attempting a national consolidation based upon consolidating the 80 percent majority of Hindus. The social justice discourse was doing its bit to splinter the Hindu vote into a multiplicity of caste segments and thereby marginalise the majority community of the country entirely by reducing it to competing and hostile caste alignments. Pushed beyond a point, this marginalisation alarmed and angered the Hindu majority. From around 2008-13, the Rashtriya Swayam-Sewak Sangh (RSS) and its affiliate organisations attempted to create a right wing consolidation–a revival of nationalism as it were. The image of Bharat Mata seated on a lion now began to emerge in most street corners of mofussil towns of North India. The buildup to 2014 had begun.

Three Strands of the Freedom Struggle

To understand India's present therefore, and to determine where the nation state is headed for, it is highly essential for us to deconstruct our recent history. We must understand the seamlessness of connectivity in our pre and post colonial narratives that emerge from the way India was colonised and then how precisely it got its freedom. We need to understand the three distinct strands that emerged in the course of our freedom struggle. These are:-

- The discourse of imperial justice as equity, practiced by the anglophile lawyers who remained craven subjects of the empire. Their method was to plead and petition the monarch for Home rule.

- The discourse of renunciative politics as practiced by Mahatma Gandhi through a mass mobilisation of the rural folk. This strand of mass-mobilisation movements re-emerged post-Emergency as the JP Movement and later as the Anna Hazare Movement against corruption in 2012-13.
- The third strand was that of violent Armed Resistance. It had first broken out amongst the British Indian Armed Forces in 1857, and then in the form of the revolutionaries like Bhagat Singh and Azad and finally culminated in the form of the INA from 1943-45. It culminated in the subsequent mutinies it inspired in the British Indian Armed Forces in 1946. 1857 had come very close to overthrowing the British. The INA however, actually won India freedom by inspiring physical mutinies in the Royal Indian Navy, the British Indian Army and the RIAF in the immediate wake of World War-II in 1946. That is the historical truth about India's freedom.

Patterns of the Past

These then, are the patterns that seamlessly link our pre-colonial history with the post-colonial developments. Modern Indian History also clearly highlights the coincidence of oil price shocks with deep-seated dislocations of the Indian political economy. Three oil shocks have triggered three major political crises in India in 1973-75, 1990 and 2014. Dislocation of the political economy delegitimises the ruling elite and in the Indian case, dislocated the imperial justice discourse through the medium of Gandhian mass mobilisation in movements like the one triggered by JP in 1977 and Anna Hazare in 2013-14. It is important for us to recognize that the Colonial empire did not grant India Independence. They "transferred power", to a coterie of anglophile lawyers who continued with the ideology of imperial justice as equity by enshrining Justice as the corner stone virtually of the Indian Constitution. The Indian Constitution was largely a codification of the British India Act of 1935. Its corner stone remained the fact that India was such a heterogeneous mixture of warring castes and creeds that some external agency was needed to ensure justice and equity between its feuding communities. This role was performed by the British Queen Empress in the Colonial period. It was taken over by the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty in the post –colonial period. Whenever oil shocks de-stabilised the Indian political

economy, the Ruling Nehru Gandhi dynasty was overthrown with the help of Gandhian style mass movements like the ones led by JP in the 1970s and by Anna Hazare in 2013-14 as also the RSS inspired upsurge of Right Wing Nationalism that culminated in the Modi victory of 2014.Those are the patterns that emerge from an analysis of our recent pre- and post- colonial history.

2

Bose the Indian Samurai

> *"The way of the Samurai is found in death. When it comes to either or, there is only the quick choice of death… We all want to live and in a large part, we make our logic according to what we like. By setting his heart right every morning and evening, the Samurai is able to live as though his body were already dead, he gains freedom in the way."*
>
> – Yamamoto Tsunetomo Hagakure
> The Book of The Samurai

Bose Archetypal Warrior

The purpose of this book is not so much to focus on Bose as a political leader but more specifically as an innovative military leader and Supreme Commander of the INA-in fact *India's first Supreme Commander.* Bose had very little formal military training. This was confined to the University Cadets Corps level training (The Calcutta University Territorials-equivalent to the present day National Cadet Corps - NCC). As such his military education was confined to drill, elementary musketry and rudimentary tactics. However, what is notable is the enthusiasm and gusto with which he responded to this military training. What is noteworthy is his high risk-taking ability, his outstanding courage in the face of certain death, displayed not just once but time and again in the course of his amazingly adventurous life which reads like a racy thriller. What was even more remarkable was his tenacity of will and his never say die spirit with even the most adverse

circumstances and out-right defeat did not weaken his burning resolve to fight on for the freedom of his country. The troubles and reverses he faced would have devastated lesser men. Each time he suffered a major setback, Bose simply picked up the pieces, bounced back and started all over again. Fierce fighting races like, the Germans and the Japanese, could not be fooled by outer pretence. They instinctively saw in Bose a great warrior spirit with incredible courage and amazing tenacity. Even the biographies written by his enemies- the British cannot keep out that edge of admiration for such a tenacious and dedicated enemy. The Japanese however, paid him the ultimate compliment, They called him the "*Indian Samurai*". What is most remarkable about this man was his innate warrior temperament and fierce tenacity of will and resolve. From his very childhood, the military fascinated him and he epitomised the essentially Indian tradition of the soldier – saint – the *Sant – Sipahi*. As a boy, just out of school, he had runaway from home to seek a guru. He was deeply influenced by Swami Vivekananda and the monks of the Ramakrishna order. In fact they had planted in him the seeds of a burning Indian revivalism. This tradition of warrior saints is so strongly reflected in the Sikh military brotherhood in North India, as also by another soldier-saint like Chatrapati Shivaji Maratha and even Maharana Pratap.

Bose was tall (5'11") and had a good military bearing. The military fascinated him and he was deeply chagrined by the fact that the British did not consider the people of Bengal as a martial race. He had a great fondness for uniforms and as a Congress Youth leader in Kolkata had designed for himself and his volunteers, a white uniform with military accoutrements. With this volunteer unit, he had provided guards of honour to visiting Congress dignitaries. He revelled in uniforms in an era when there was a fascination for uniforms in fascist Europe and civilian leaders like Benito Mussolini, Herman Goering and Himmler liked to strut about in resplendent military uniforms. Nationalism in Europe sought to express itself in the colours of militarism and the Nazis in particular, had cashed into the fondness of the German people for resplendent military uniforms. Apart from the military, there were uniforms for the SA, SS, Gestapo and the Nazis. Bose had this boyish enthusiasm for military uniforms and had designed his own military uniform, complete with white patrol, cross belt, Neo-Nazi jackboots and a side cap. His nationalism had a distinct flavour of militarism. Frankly, in the India of that era, with its undue emphasis on pacifism and non-violence, this trend towards a nascent militarism, was

sorely needed as a counter-poise and corrective to the dominant Gandhian ideology which was sadly, just not working as far as evicting the British was concerned.

Bose was a voracious reader and read avidly about Geo-politics and matters military and had developed an intuitive grasp of the subject. He had impeccable academic credentials as highlighted by his topping the ICS entrance examination (he was fourth in the merit list). He had tremendous insight and vision, good diagnostic abilities and a mind which could come out with creative and innovative solutions. His assessments and forecasts of the geo-political scenarios were usually highly accurate. He had been in Europe in the 1930s and had travelled extensively to study past and ongoing freedom movements, especially the Irish freedom struggle. No wonder, he could hold his own subsequently, during discussions with warlords like Hitler, Ribbentrop, Mussolini and the German General Staff. Subsequently, he greatly impressed the Japanese with his intense nationalism and grasp of the military idiom. *The Japanese found in him a true Samurai–brave and fearless–who would always chose the path of danger and death over safety and self preservation and was so utterly and so transparently committed to his country*. In his life and deeds, he exemplified the spirit of the Samurai and lived according to the code of the Bushido.

Bose therefore, was clearly an archetypal scholar-warrior, more in the tradition of self-taught military leaders of the East like Mao ze Dong, Vo Nguyen Giap and Van Tien Dung. They had no formal military training in western style military academies but were brilliant, self-taught soldiers and tenacious warriors who had given famous western academy trained Generals a run for their money. What characterised them was their innate warrior temperament and fighting spirit. Early on, Bose displayed this in ample measure. However, there was one significant difference- the Chinese and Vietnamese revolutionary military leaders like Mao and Giap had risen in the course of decades of guerilla wars from which they had switched to regular warfare. In Bose's case, destiny had catapulted him directly to the Supreme Commander of the INA and in that role as strategist and inspirational leader, he was remarkably successful and prescient. His analysis of the geo-political situation was proved to be spot on in hind-sight. What he perhaps lacked was combat experience at the tactical and operational art level and this certainly was a handicap when he had to direct actual combat operations in Burma. Even then, like Mao and Giap, he proved to be a

brilliant strategist. Even Mao did not have flair at the tactical level. During the Long March, his column had taken the heaviest casualties. But where Mao remained unsurpassed was in his strategic insights which almost always proved to be right. That is why he became the supreme and unchallenged leader and "Great–Helmsman," of the Chinese Revolution. The same could well be said of Bose. Even though he lacked military experience at the tactical level, strategically he was a genius and in hindsight, each one of his strategic insights turned out to be absolutely right. He has been vindicated by history and hindsight. He was a highly charismatic figure and a great orator and spell-binding speaker. He exemplified Ann Arbors concept of the "spell binder" which she has used to analyse charismatic leadership. Rhetoric, says Ann Arbor, plays a major role in throwing up charismatic leaders. His transparent sincerity of purpose was so very evident. He spoke from the heart and his deep commitment to the cause of his country stood out strongly. His speeches were simply mesmerising because he spoke from an essential synergy, a harmonisation of mind-body and soul towards a common purpose, imbued with burning idealism. It evoked strong emotions in his audience. Bose therefore was a military leader in that new oriental mould which had emerged in the early part of the 20th century, to overthrow the yoke of western imperialism in Asia. Like Hitler and Mussolini (with whom he rubbed shoulders in Europe), he was a spellbinding orator and this was the basis of his charisma. He used the National Socialist techniques of mass mobilisation, huge military rallies and stirring rhetoric to fire up huge gatherings of soldiers and civilians alike. He could throw vast crowds into raptures with his rhetoric. Soldiers had tears streaming down their face as he touched deep chords of nationalist emotion in their beings.

He took the Indian Military Prisoners of War from the Germans and Japanese and welded them from ethnicity-based regiments of the British Indian Army, into mixed all-India all-Class units. He replaced the British sub-nationality based system of motivation premised on the Izzat (honour) of the Qom (community) with militant nationalism as the driving credo. His own personal commitment to the cause of the freedom of his country was so intense and transparent that it charged up all who came in contact with him.

Bose as a charismatic military figure inspired intense devotion and personal loyalty. He had displayed his sterling leadership qualities when raising the Indische Legion out of the Indian prisoners of war held with

Germany. He had spoken to the Indian PoWs and turned them around to fight for their own country. He had turned this Legion into a credible military outfit and zealously guarded its nationalist credentials. The force was raised to three battallions strength and formed the Indische Legion. These forces, he said, would only fight for Indian freedom and not be exploited by others for their own wars and purposes. When the first INA, initially led by General Mohan Singh, was in dire straits, the INA rank and file had unanimously wanted Bose to lead them. Only he had the charisma and international stature, they felt, to weld the force together and gain the respect of the Japanese. His transfer to the Far East caused a dramatic improvement in the morale and fortunes of the INA. Such instances of the dramatic impact of personality on a war situation are somewhat rare. Such leaders are regarded as the great captains of history. Alexander was such a General who could rouse his troops with his impassioned speeches and fire them up with visions of conquering the whole world.

How Bose devised his own militant nationalism based model of military motivation and successfully superimposed it on the ethnic tradition of the Indian Regiments of the British Indian Army, is truly a remarkable feat. Many of the motivational techniques he pioneered and the marching songs and slogans he devised have become an inseparable part of free India's Army. Thus, the salutation 'Jai Hind' comes from the INA and the cadets of the Indian Military Academy (IMA) and the recruits in the Regimental Centres today pass out to the strains of "*Kadam Kadam Badhaye Jaa – Khushi ke Geet Gaye Jaa*", an iconic marching song of the INA. It was the genius of Bose that converted the national anthem *"Jana Gana Mana"* into a military band tune. That tune has now been re-appropriated by Independent India as our National Anthem that is played on all ceremonial occasions. In this way, Bose proved to be a master in military motivation and was a highly innovative genius in terms of creating and building organisations, creating an organisational culture and inspiring men in live combat situations.

The INA units would subsequently take staggering losses but some of them retained their combat cohesion almost till the bitter end. Despite their formative constraints, many of these units performed very creditably in combat, especially in the Battles of Mount Popa and on the Chindwin River in Burma (now Myanmar). Wherever, the local leadership was good, these units stood up and fought very well.

Bose was a modernist in the Kemal Pasha tradition and visualized India as a great and modern nation with heavy industries and total eradication of poverty. Bose was committed to women's empowerment and raised the Rani of Jhansi Regiment, which he took into combat in Burma. In the long retreat from Burma, he left his staff car and marched on foot with his men. He personally led his troops in the field, exposed himself on the frontlines, almost praying that if he fell on the battlefield, his sacrifice would galvanise his Army and people to even greater efforts. His total absence of the fear of death was his hall mark and characterised him as a true Samurai.

The Radicalisation of Bose

The radicalisation of Bose had begun in 1927, when for the first time he openly questioned the Gandhian philosophy and methods at the Madras Convention of the Congress Party. Bose was then the General Secretary. The arrival of the Simon Commission had created national outrage, especially after the death of Lala Lajpat Rai in the police assault. Bose was furious. He was impatient with the slow pace of the freedom struggle based on the tenets of non-violence. He stated that "Gandhian philosophy created a feeling and impression that modernism was bad, large scale production is evil, wants should not be increased and the standard of living should not be raised and that we should endeavour to go back to the bullock cart age and that the soul is so important that physical culture and military training must be ignored." That was quintessential Bose and he had dared to question the Mahatma himself.

He was modernist in outlook, progressive and an activist. His mind was then turning to matters other than military, writes his biographer Gerard H. Corr. Bose later said that India today needed a philosophy of activism and needed to be inspired by robust optimism. Bose was always direct and to the point of bluntness. He pulled no punches and this did not always endear him to the Congressmen for whom Gandhianism was Holy Grail. This was the time when he formed a "National Volunteer Group", designed its uniform and annoyed a lot of Congressmen by parading around in a self designed white uniform (complete with military side cap, jackboots and cross belt). He organised "Guards of Honour" for visiting Congress dignitaries in Kolkata. The glimmers of Bose as India's future military leader were beginning to show.

The early 1930s saw him undergo many spells in British jails where he was beaten up badly. His health deteriorated and he was later freed to go to Europe to recuperate. The British were very happy to see him out of India, as they viewed him as a significant trouble creator. From February 1933 onwards, he travelled all over Europe and visited Australia, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Germany, Italy and Ireland. Bose utilised this period to study the histories of the various revolutionary and nationalist movements. In particular, he was deeply impressed by the Irish Revolt after the First World War. He met Anton de Valera in Dublin and engaged him intensively on his experiences of the Irish struggle. He studied the histories of such movements as the Young Turks and the Czechoslovakian Free Legion.

Europe was then in the grip of a massive historical churning. The great depression and economic chaos were seeding rage and resentment. The Fascists were on the rise in Italy and the Nazis in Germany and Austria. Militant nationalism was on the march all over Europe. Bose went through Hitler's Mein Kampf and was distressed to see derogatory references to India and Indians. He in fact, met Hitler, Goering, Gobbles and other top Nazi leaders, and in particular, made strenuous efforts to change the views of Hitler, however without much apparent success. Bose wrote the book *The Indian Struggle 1924-34*. His Secretary then was Emile Schenkl, an Austrian lady who was interested in his work. The book was banned in India but received good reviews in Britain. Bose returned to India in 1936 and was promptly put back in prison.

At the Haripura Congress Session in 1938 Bose was elected President of the Congress. In his speech, Bose spoke of the need of national planning, family planning and an end to religious intolerance. Mahatma Gandhi had held out an olive branch to this firebrand Bengali. The temporary truce between these two stalwarts broke down the very next year. Bose stood up for election a second time. This led to a direct confrontation. Bose was finding the Congress leadership too bland and mild in opposing the Raj. He wanted to sharpen the conflict and to swing the Congress to the left. Bose won the elections hands down over his officially appointed rival Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramaiyya.

Gandhi took the results as a personal defeat. He thereafter began to manoeuevre against Bose in a determined way in 1939. Bose wanted the British to be given a definite time limit for the grant of freedom. This was not even included in the Congress Resolution for Swaraj. The resolution also

asked Gandhi to appoint a Working Committee. This was humiliating. Gandhiji was being quite vindictive and by May 1939, Bose was left with no choice but to tender his resignation. The clash also caused a rift between Nehru and Bose. Bose had earlier counted on Nehru's support for his efforts to swing Congress to the Left, but Nehru did not want to be seen on the wrong side of the power structure in the Congress and simply ditched Bose. Bose was left angry and humiliated. He now tried to align the Socialists under a new Forward Bloc Party, but was not particularly successful outside Bengal, where his popular power base lay. That was when the Second World War broke out.

Bose staged a protest at the Memorial of the Black Hole in Kolkata and on July 02, 1940 he was put under arrest. It is noteworthy that Bose had begun moves to establish links with the Soviet Union as early as July 1939. He gave a letter to his nephew Amiya Bose to give to the Indian Communist leaders for onwards dispatch to Moscow. There was no response. The Comintern's senior leadership somehow distrusted Netaji. However the Kirti-Kisan Party affiliated to the Communist Party of India (CPI) now began to plan his escape. Some key dramatise personnel in this episode were Bhagat Ram Talwar, Harminder Singh Sodhi, Achar Singh Cheema and Teja Singh Sutantar.

The Great Escape

In prison, Bose went on a fast unto death for India's Freedom. His health deteriorated rapidly and he was shifted to house arrest at his Elgin Road residence. It was a meticulously planned escape. Bose went into seclusion ostensibly to engage in spiritual practices. He grew a beard. His 20 year old nephew, Sisir Bose (son of Sarat Chandra Bose) played a significant role in his escape. Over a period of time, he transferred most of Bose's personal belongings to his own home. On his uncle's instructions, he practiced long distance driving. Bose was to go to the court on January 26, 1941 for trial under a sedition case of secret meeting with the Germans in India. On January 16, 1941, Sisir drove his Buik car to Elgin Road and parked it in the usual place. At 0100 hrs that night, Bose went out with him, dressed as a Muslim. They drove along the Grand Trunk Road to Bararee near Dhanbad. They stayed at a relatives home for the night and then set out to Gomoh railway station. Here Bose left Sisir and caught the train to Peshawar.

He stayed for a week in Peshawar as an insurance agent, using the name Mohammad Ziauddin. In Peshawar, a pre-arranged contact got him to Kabul. He set out on this difficult journey by car but it broke down and he had to cross the dangerous tribal territory of the Khyber Pass on foot pretending to be deaf, dumb and mute. He lived in Kabul in most unsanitary surroundings. His pleas to the Soviet and Japanese Embassies drew no response. This was a most delicate and dangerous period as Kabul was swarming with British agents and spies. Finally in February 1941, he found refuge with an Indian called Uttam Chand, who kept him till March, when the Italian Ambassador agreed to help him. He had finally obtained an interview with the Italian legation on February 22, 1941. This was highly successful. He was provided with an Italian passport in the name of Count Orlando Mazzotta. He thereafter moved by car to the Russian frontier. He crossed over and travelled by train through Bokhara and Samarkand, and arrived in Moscow towards the end of March 1941. His epic journey by road, rail, aircraft and on foot had taken 2 months and 11 days. It was a remarkable escape and had taxed his stamina and nerves.

Dogged by Treachery

Sitanshu Kar's political biography of Bose takes a closer look at this adventure in hindsight. At the start of the war, Bose had tended to take a rather Euro-centric view of where the war would be decided. The outcome of this war, he was sure, would be decided in Europe. At that time the Japanese invasion of China was rather unpopular with the people of India. So at that stage, Bose had not really thought of seeking their support in a major way. His first preference was to get Soviet support for the Indian Freedom Struggle. The Soviets however were distinctly cold towards his overtures. Perhaps their Communist sources in India advised them not to trust Bose. Possibly they were not sure of him because of his dalliance with the Germans and Japanese. What we do know now is that Bose's efforts were tragically dogged by treachery. It now turns out that Bhagat Ram Talwar was a double agent who worked both for the British MI-5 and the Soviet NKVD. So, the British Intelligence at the highest level was aware of his escape. However, it seems they let him escape, as perhaps they felt it was better that he go out of the country. His presence in India was a source of trouble and anxiety for the British.

Ultra

The British decoding machine called "Ultra" had been created by the Code and Cipher School of Bletchley Park near London. It had broken the German, Japanese and Italian cipher codes and was thus regularly able to eavesdrop on secret German, Japanese and Italian communications about Bose. The British would certainly have been monitoring the signal traffic of the German and Italian Embassies in Kabul and would have come to know of Bose's arrival there and his overtures to the Germans and Italians even if they had not received that intelligence from their humint agents. Why then did they let him escape?

There are a number of speculations on this aspect. The most primary British motivation was to guard their Ultra–secret code breaking device and give no hint or clue that would raise the suspicions of the Germans or Italians that this code has been compromised.

The second reason, as stated earlier, perhaps was that they were glad to see Bose get out of India, where he was a major nuisance and problem and his immense popularity precluded taking any drastic action against him for fear of a popular backlash. The same would not hold true once he went abroad and operated incognito.

The treacherous Bhagat Ram Talwar leaked all details of his escape to the British Intelligence and they tasked him to keep in touch with him and keep the British informed. Talwar met Sarat Bose at his house in Woodburn Park in Calcutta. He handed over a package from Subhash Bose. It contained a personal letter, the manuscript of a book *The Forward Bloc – Its Justification* and another document-*A Message to My Countrymen*; written from somewhere in Europe. Talwar informed Sarat about Subhash's escape to Moscow. Subsequently, the brothers kept in touch till November 1941 through wireless messages transmitted from Berlin to Tokyo and passed on through the Japanese Consulate in Calcutta. These messages ended just before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour. Talwar subsequently went 12 times to Kabul to receive money and instructions sent by Bose for creating an uprising in India. These were dutifully passed on by Talwar to the British Intelligence and NKVD. Most of the gold and currency were purloined by these agents. It showed the extent to which some treacherous Indians could sink.

SOE, Orders For Assassination Of Bose

Sitanshu Kar writes that in March 1941, Churchill had issued orders to the Special Operations Executive to assassinate Bose. The SOE was a 13,000 strong covert group, set up to execute special tasks like subversion of the enemy, espionage, sabotage, special reconnaissance, and assassination of select targets. It was nicknamed the "Baker Street irregulars". The SOE had its HQ in London and had offices in Delhi and Cairo. The Delhi office was later shifted to Ceylon (Sri Lanka) and later a mission had come up in Singapore. In early 1941, The SOE had decoded some intelligence (on the basis of an Italian telegram that had been intercepted) that Subhash Bose was travelling from Afghanistan to Germany via Iran, Iraq and Turkey. On receipt of this intelligence Churchill had ordered that Bose be assassinated. The plan was to finish him off in Istanbul. However, as we know, Bose took a different route to reach Berlin and the SOE could not carry out the order. After Bose reached Berlin the SOE personnel in Istanbul queried whether the orders to assassinate Bose still stood. The British Foreign Office confirmed that it did.

The German Interlude, Sonderferrat Indien

On April 03, 1941 just a day after he landed in Berlin, Bose arrived at the Whilhelmstrasse where he was received by the Under Secretary of State, Ernst Woermann. Bose made a detailed presentation of his plans and Woerman was struck by the meticulous details he had gone into. Bose was clear that he wanted to liberate India from British suzerainty. As a prelude to further assistance, the Germans could recognise a provisional government of free India,in exile , that he would set up in a few days. Hugh Toye says that Bose's case in Berlin was handled by the Working Group of the German Foreign Office (GFO). Admiral Von Trott was the head of the Indian Referat in the GFO. Subsequently, a Sonderferrat Indien (Special Indian Bureau) was established in the GFO to deal with Bose.

On April 09, 1941, Bose had put forth a detailed proposal that suggested that the Axis Powers would sign a treaty with the Free India Government in Exile guaranteeing India's independence once World War Two was won. He also proposed an army of about 50,000 Indian soldiers could be established with recruits from POWs taken by the Axis Powers. Notably, many Indian troops had indeed been taken prisoners by then in North Africa. Bose had also added a provision, that after liberating India, Germany would hand over governance responsibilities to the Government in exile headed by Bose. The

German government was deeply impressed by the confidence and resolution showed by Bose. It was precisely this that had prompted them to get him to Berlin in the first place. However, they sought time to examine his proposals. Bose returned to the German foreign office a month later with a draft Declaration of Indian Independence. The Germans were reluctant to concede this aspect at that time. On May 24, the German Foreign office got back to Bose. They suggested that a Free India centre be set up in Berlin. For this purpose a loan of 10 million Reich Marks(RM) was approved with 12,000 RMs set aside for personal expenses of Bose. To fund his activities aimed at freeing India, the Germans, says Toye, gave a loan to the Free India Centre and Bose personally. The Germans gave Bose a good house, a car and special rations to entertain guests and dignitaries. His personal allowance was £800 per month. (Later, the monthly grant to the Free India Centre was increased from £1,200 in 1941 to £3,200 in 1944). It is noteworthy that later Bose returned a substantial amount of this loan from South East Asia.

The Germans were a bit surprised with Bose. They felt, he was becoming too demanding by degrees. They had seen him as a leader in refuge who could be used to their advantage. But this man was turning out to be different and difficult. They put him under discreet surveillance and began to monitor his phones and open his mail. Bose was unaware of this (even though he did suspect that he was under surveillance). During this period, Bose went and met the Italian leaders including Mussolini himself. They were ready for a joint declaration on Indian Independence but wanted Germany to also come on board first.

Thus in early 1941, both Italy and Japan were willing to make a Joint Declaration of support for Indian Independence, but were unwilling to do so if Hitler would not consent to this. Bose had two alternatives–either stay on in Berlin or move to neutral Switzerland. Bose decided to stay on in Berlin as it was the hub of Axis decision making in Europe. His activities in Berlin were on three fronts:-

- **Diplomatic:** He strove hard to get a Joint Axis Declaration on Indian Independence and Sovereignty. For many months, this was his primary field of effort in Europe. When this did not work out, he tried to get Japan and Italy to jointly or singly give this assurance.
- **Think Tank:** The Free India Centre worked for the cause of Indian liberation. It also tried to develop a Think Tank for the planned post-

independence economic development of India and introducing societal reforms.

- **Radio Broadcasts:** Initially, Bose insisted that his clandestine radio broadcasts to India would start only after the German declaration of support for Indian Independence. However, since this was getting inordinately delayed, he decided to commence these rousing broadcasts in 1942.

The German Invasion of the Soviet Union

Meanwhile Bose got a meeting with Foreign Minister Ribbentrop in end April 1941. He requested for a status quo in German policy towards Russia till the British were totally vacated from North Africa. Ribbentrop had served as Ambassador in Britain and despised the British. He was pleased to see Bose's hatred towards the British. Both men developed a good chemistry based upon their mutual animus against the British Empire. Hitler however commenced Operation Barbarossa in end June 1941. This was the gigantic and massive invasion of the USSR. The bulk of the Whermacht units were switched around from Western Europe to the Soviet borders. To cover the massive troop movements towards the Soviet border, an elaborate deception plan was drawn up. The Germans launched Op Sea Lion–the hypothetical plan for the sea-borne invasion of Great Britain. It was preceded by massive air attacks on Britain, which are now celebrated as the "Battle of Britain" and were then seen as the prelude to a German invasion. Churchill went on record as saying "never was so much owed by so many to so few." The German deception thus was complete and total. Britain waged a life and death air war, as it were, to stave off the impending sea-borne invasion. This, the Germans never intended. They further deepened this deception by Project Sunflower–Rommel's Afrika Corps operations in North Africa. Rommel had been allocated just one Panzer Division and one Light Division to help the Italians. Some eight Panzer Divisions and some 360 Infantry Divisions of the German Whermacht were meanwhile built up to launch the massive invasion of USSR. To cover this large scale invasion, the German media played up the flamboyant Rommel as the soldier in the sun. The aim was to divert attention towards England and North Africa by inordinate levels of media coverage and in this they succeeded entirely.

Thus the Battle of Britain and the Campaign in North Africa, which the British military historians tout as the most critical campaigns of the Second World War, were in fact just German deception operations that had completely fooled the world and helped to cover the most massive build up of German forces for the invasion of Soviet Union. When Hitler actually moved East, the world was left dazed and shocked as its attention had been riveted by German and European media coverage directed entirely towards UK and the African theatre. The surprise was complete and overwhelming and the Soviet defences simply caved in initially. The purge of Soviet Marshal Tukachevisky and thousands of Russian officers just before the war proved to be a catastrophe. By the winter, the German Panzer divisions were almost knocking on the gates of Moscow.

Bose was as shocked as the rest of the world by this apparently sudden decision of Hitler to invade USSR. He had been taken in by the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and saw Germany and the USSR as friendly states that would both support India's Independence Struggle against the imperialist powers. This sudden invasion completely undid his plans. In November 1941, he got his second meeting with the German Foreign Minister Ribbentrop. He remonstrated with him about this sudden invasion of the Soviet Union and felt it was a historic mistake which would overtax German resources in a two-front war. (This assessment was to prove prophetic). He again demanded that the Germans recognise the Independence of India. Ribbentrop patiently explained to him that it was German policy never to promise something that they could not carry out later. In other words, he suggested that the North African operations of Rommel would not perhaps be pressed on towards the Suez canal and then on to India. As such, this was not the time for Germany to announce its support to the cause of Indian Independence. Bose was deeply disappointed. He reiterated his request for a meeting with Hitler himself.

Bose conducted himself with dignity and reserve as the representative of a sovereign nation. He never spoke to the low level officers and minions of the Sonderferrat Indien in the German Office. He dealt only at the appropriate diplomatic level. Outspoken, as he was, he vigorously called the invasion of Russia a mistake. His entire plan of seeking Soviet or German support for India's freedom now seemed to be unravelling rapidly. He was desperately trying to seek an audience with the German Fuherer, Adolf Hitler himself. The very fact that his request was taken seriously and he

finally did get his meeting with Hitler just goes to show the respect he had earned in Berlin. He had rubbed shoulders with the likes of the German Foreign Minister Ribbentrop and had impressed him greatly. There were so many rebel leaders from Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Persia and other Soviet territories floating around in Germany those days, looking for German support to serve as Brandenburg style Special Forces who would operate in the enemies' rear and facilitate the independence of their territories from the Soviet yoke. None of them ever got to meet even Ribbentrop, leave alone Adolf Hitler. However, despite the deference he was shown, Bose was unhappy in Germany. He was uncomfortable in Europe and now was yearning to come back closer to India, to a place from where he could influence events in his homeland. The racial outlook of Nazi Germany distressed him but he did not give up hope. Valiantly, he tried to make the best of what had turned out to be a bad bargain. Bose now found himself locked up in the wrong theatre of war. Meanwhile, events were rapidly crystallising in Asia.

Ranjan Bora's Account of Netaji's Work in Germany

Perhaps one of the best accounts of Subhash Bose's work in Germany has been given out by Ranjan Bora in his seminal paper published by the *Institute for Historical Review* Journal cited earlier. I would like to quote from this in some detail for the positive and deep insight it provides into that interlude. This account is important because it is somewhat at variance with Hugh Toye's accounts which seem to suggest that Bose was unhappy in Berlin and the racially prejudiced Nazis were perhaps supercilious in their attitude to Indians in general and Bose in particular. That is why Hitler had perhaps kept him waiting for a year. Bora's account however, gives a surprisingly different picture. As per his inputs, the *Nazi leadership was very greatly impressed by Bose and actually went out of their way to support him.* The Indian Legion was led by Germans but they went the extra mile to impart thoroughly professional training to the Indian soldiers and very cordial and fraternal relations developed between the Germans and Indians at the interpersonal level. Bora has interviewed many Indian soldiers of the Legion to come to these conclusions. That is why the Ranjan Bora account is being reproduced verbatim for scholars to come to their own conclusions.

Bora writes, "Bose was welcomed in Germany, although the news of his arrival there was kept a secret for some time for political reasons. The

German Foreign Office, which was assigned the primary responsibility of dealing with Bose and taking care of him, had been well informed of the background and political status of the Indian leader through its pre-war Consulate-General at Calcutta and also by its representative in Kabul. Bose himself, was naturally somewhat impatient for getting into action soon after his arrival in Berlin. He submitted a memorandum to the German Government on April, 9 1941 which outlined a plan for co-operation between the Axis Powers and India. Among other things, it called for the setting up of a "Free India Government" in Europe, preferably in Berlin, establishment of a Free India broadcasting station calling upon the Indian people to assert their independence and rise up in revolt against the British authorities, underground work in Afghanistan (Kabul) involving independent tribal territories lying between Afghanistan and India and within India itself for fostering and aiding the revolution with provision of finances by Germany in the form of a loan to the Free India Government-in-exile and deployment of German military contingents to smash the British army in India. In a supplementary memorandum bearing the same date, Bose requested that an early pronouncement be made regarding the freedom of India and the Arab countries. *It is significant to note that the memorandum did not mention the need for formation of an Indian legion.* Evidently the idea of recruiting the Indian Prisoners of War for the purpose of establishing a nucleus of an Indian national army did not occur to him during his early days in Berlin" Bora goes on to add:

"At that time the German government was in the process of formulating its own plan for dealing with Subhash Chandra Bose in the best possible manner. The Foreign Office felt itself inadequate to discharge this awesome responsibility without referring the whole matter to Hitler. While this issue was being considered at the highest level of the government, Bose's own requests as set forth in the submitted memorandum, made it far too complicated and involved, to be resolved at an early date".

"Finally after months of waiting and many moments of disappointment, often bordering on despair for Bose, Germany agreed to give him unconditional and all-out help. The two immediate results of this decision were the establishment of a Free India Centre and inauguration of a Free India Radio, both beginning their operations in November 1941. These two organisations played vital and significant roles in projecting Bose's increasing activities in Germany."

In its first official meeting on November 2, 1941 the Free India Centre adopted four historical resolutions that would serve as guidelines for the entire movement in subsequent months and years in Europe and Asia:

- First, Jai Hind or Victory to India, would be the official form of salutation;
- Secondly, Nobel laureate poet Rabindranath Tagore's famous patriotic song *Jana Gana Mona* was to be the national anthem for the free India Bose was fighting for;
- Thirdly, in a multi-lingual state like India, the most widely-spoken language, Hindustani, was to be the national language;
- Fourthly, Subhash Chandra Bose would hereafter be known and addressed as Netaji, the Indian equivalent of the "leader" or the "Führer."

In November 1941, Azad Hind Radio (or the Free India Radio) opened its programme with an announcing speech by Netaji himself, which, in fact, was a disclosure of his identity that had been kept officially secret for so long. The radio programs were broadcast in several Indian languages on a regular basis.

The Question of the Formation of the Indian Legion

Netaji himself, when he left India, could not have, by any stretch of imagination, thought of forming a national army unit outside the country, and therefore he had no definite plans chalked out then for its realization. Even while in Berlin, he could not think of it during the first few months of his stay there.

Bora asks, "When and how, therefore, did he come to conceive such a plan?" He quotes Mr. Ganpuley who relates an interesting episode in this regard.

"It was all due to a brain wave of Netaji which started working by a simple incident. He read one day about some half a dozen Indian Prisoners-of-War who were brought to Berlin by the Radio Department to listen to the BBC and other stations which sent out their programmes in Hindustani. He saw them there going about, not as free Indians, but as Prisoners-of-War. They were brought to the Radio Office every day to listen to and translate

the Hindustani programmes, and were sent back to their quarters escorted by a sentry ... After he had a talk with them about war, about their captivity and their present life, his active mind started working... He pondered over it for some time and *decided to form a small national military uni*t. No sooner was this decision taken by him ... he started negotiating with that section of the German Foreign Office with which he was in constant touch. He put before them his plans for training Indian youths from the prisoners' camps for a national militia."

Bora adds, "Although somewhat sceptical and hesitant at the beginning, the German response to the plans was encouraging. It was a time psychologically well-chosen by Netaji. The Allied Forces had been defeated on the Continent and the Wehrmacht was marching ahead successfully in the Soviet Union. It was also a historical coincidence that a large number of British Indian Prisoners of War, captured during Rommel's blitzkrieg in North Africa, lay in German hands. Netaji's first idea was to form small parachute parties to spread propaganda in, and transmit intelligence from, the North-West Frontier in India. The reaction of some selected prisoners who were brought to Berlin from the camp of Lansdorf in Germany and Cyrenaica was so encouraging, that he asked for all Indian prisoners held in North Africa to be brought over to Germany at once. The Germans complied with this request and the prisoners began to be concentrated at Annaburg camp near Dresden. The recruitment efforts, however, at the onset met with some opposition from the prisoners, who evidently had misgivings about Netaji's intentions and motivations." In this regard Hugh Toye writes:

> "When Bose himself visited the camp in December there was still marked hostility. His speech was interrupted, and much of what he had to say went unheard. But private interviews were more encouraging; the men's questions showed interest-what rank would they receive? What credit would be given for Indian Army seniority? How would the Legionary stand in relation to the German soldier? Bose refused to bargain, and some who might have been influential recruits were turned away. On the other hand, many of the men paid him homage as a distinguished Indian, several professed themselves ready to join the Legion unconditionally."

Bora writes, "Netaji sought and got agreement from the Germans that the Wehrmacht would train the Indians in the strictest military discipline, and they were to be trained in all branches of infantry in using weapons and motorised units the same way a German formation is trained with the Indian legionaries were not to be mixed up with any of the German formations with that they were not to be sent to any front other than in India for fighting against the British, but would be allowed to fight in self defence at any other place if surprised by any enemy formation with that in all other respects the Legion members would enjoy the same facilities and amenities regarding pay, clothing, food, leave, etc., as a German unit. By December 1941 all arrangements were complete and the next important task was to persuade men to come forward and form the nucleus. It appeared that the POWs needed to be convinced that there were civilian Indian youth as well, studying, well placed in life and responsible to their families at home, who were ready to give up everything to join the Legion. Ten of the forty young Indians then residing in Berlin came forward. They were quickly joined by five POWs who were already in Berlin in connection with the German radio propaganda and the first group of fifteen people was thus formed."

On December 25, 1941 a meeting of Indian residents in Berlin was called in the office of the Free India Center, to give a send-off to the first fifteen who were to leave the following day for Frankenburg, the first training camp and headquarters for the Legion. The brief ceremony was simple and solemn. Netaji blessed the Legion, the first of its kind in the history of the struggle for Indian Independence. He christened it Azad Hind Fauj (Indian National Army). The Indian Army of Liberation in the West thus had a humble and modest birth.

The strength of the Legion grew steadily, as the task of recruitment continued unabated. Once trained to a certain level and discipline, the members of the first batch were assigned the additional responsibility of visiting the Annaberg camp and aiding in the recruitment process. While the Legion was sent to Frankenburg in Saxony, another group was taken to Meseritz in Brandenburg to be trained in tactical warfare. Abid Hasan and N.G. Swamy, the two original recruiters whom Netaji had sent to the Annaberg camp in 1941, had become de-facto founder members of the Legion at Frankenburg and the irregular Company at Meseritz respectively. At Meseritz, the Indians were placed under the command of Hauptmarm

Harbig, whose first object was to make them forget that they had been prisoners.

There were Tajiks, Uzbeks and Persians as well under training for operational roles similar to that envisaged for the Indians. In due course the trainees went on to tactical operational training, such as wireless operating, demolitions and riding and also undertook special mountain and parachute courses. According to Toye, "Morale, discipline and Indo-German relations were excellent, the German officers first-rate."

Netaji visited the camps from time to time and watched progress of the trainees. Since he himself was inclined toward military training and discipline, he followed the German training methods with great interest. It is understood that while in Germany Netaji himself underwent the rigors of such training, although authoritative documents on this subject are yet to be located by this writer. While in India, he was a member of the University Training Corps at school and commanded the volunteers at an annual session of the Indian National Congress, but he never had a formal military education prior to his arrival in Germany in 1941. As Joyce Lebra writes, "Though Bose was without any previous military experience, he got his training and discipline German-style, along with the soldiers of the Indian Legion." To him, formation of a legion was more positive, more nationalistic and more gratifying than mere radio propaganda. *Unlike his ex-compatriots in the Indian National Congress, including Gandhi, Nehru and Patel, he would rather seek confrontation with the British-with an army-than to work out a compromise with them on a conference table, on the issue of India's freedom*. A firm believer in discipline and organisation, nothing perhaps could be more satisfying to him than to see his men being trained by the German Command, with officers of the highest caliber. In four months, the number of trainees rose to three hundred. In another six months a further three hundred were added. By December 1942, exactly a year after the recruitment of the Legion was inaugurated, it attained the strength of four battalions. At the beginning of 1943 the Legion would be 2000 strong, well on its way up to the culminating point of 3500 men.

Bora cites Josef Goebbels who apparently wrote in his diary on 1 March:

> We have succeeded in prevailing upon the Indian nationalist leader, Bose, to issue an imposing declaration of war against England. It will be published most prominently in the German

> press and commented upon. In that way we shall now begin our official fight on behalf of India, even though we don't as yet admit it openly.

On March 14, he remarked about Bose, "He is an excellent worker." The fall of Singapore was a signal for Netaji to broadcast his first official speech over the Free India Radio, repeating his vow to fight British imperialism until the end. This he followed with a declaration of war against England, although at that stage such a pronouncement could only be symbolic. Netaji had not yet obtained an Axis Declaration in support of the freedom of India that he pressed for in the supplement of his first memorandum to the German Government. That government was of the opinion that the time was not ripe yet for such a declaration and unless a pronouncement of this nature could be supported by military action, it would not be of much value.

Meanwhile, Japan had proposed a tripartite declaration on India. Encouraged by this, Bose met Mussolini in Rome on May 5, and persuaded him to obtain such a declaration in favour of Indian Independence. Mussolini telegraphed the Germans, proposing proceeding at once with the declaration. To back his new proposal Mussolini told the Germans that he had urged Bose to set up a "counter-government" and to appear more conspicuously. The German reaction, which still remained guarded, is recorded by Dr. Goebbels in his diary on 11 May:

> *We don't like this idea very much since we do not think the time has yet come for such a political manoeuvre. It does appear though that the Japanese are very eager for some such step. However, emigre governments must not live too long in a vacuum. Unless they have some actuality to support them, they only exist in the realm of theory.*

Netaji apparently was of the opinion that a tripartite declaration on Indian Independence, followed up by a government-in-exile, would give some credibility to his declaration of war on England, push over the brink the imminent revolution in India, and legitimise the Indian Legion. However, Hitler held a different view. During an interview at the Führer's field headquarters on May 29, he told Netaji that a well-equipped army of a few thousand could control millions of unarmed revolutionaries, and there

could be no political change in India until an external power knocked at her door. Germany could not yet do this. To convince Netaji, he took him to a wall map, pointed to the German positions in Russia and to India. The immense distances were yet to be bridged before such a declaration could be made. The world would consider it premature, even coming from him, at this stage. Hitler was perhaps being realistic, but nevertheless it must have come as some sort of disappointment for Netaji.

Bora also confirms that in July 1942, the Germans suggested that a contingent of the Irregular Company be sent for front-line propaganda against Indian troops at El Alamein; but Rommel, who did not like battlefields turned into proving grounds for Foreign Office ideas, opposed the move. However, at the Lehrregiment manoeuvres in September, and on field exercises in October, the Indian performance won high praise. By January 1943, it was realised that maintenance of the irregulars as a separate entity was not of much practical use, and the 90 Indian men, excepting four under N.G. Swamy who were being trained for work within India were absorbed into the Legion. Since the supply of recruits from the Annaburg camp was fast being depleted, it was decided to hasten the shipment of Prisoners of War from Italy.

The Iqbal Shedai Episode,The Brief Italian Gambit

According to an agreement between Italy and Germany, all Indian POWs were to be sent directly to Germany without being held in Italian camps. But, in the meanwhile, an unforeseen impediment stood in the way. A long-time Indian resident in Rome, Iqbal Shedai, formed an Indian unit under the Italians, and began broadcasting from Rome with the aid of a few Indian prisoners. It is understood that he had conferred with Netaji a few times, but obviously had no intention of co-operating with him. From radio broadcasting, he advanced into forming an Indian military unit, although it was in clear violation of the Italo-German agreement. The unit was named the Centro Militare India, but existed only from April to November 1942. During its brief period of existence, however, Shedai succeeded in diverting several hundred volunteers to Italian camps, who would normally have gone to Germany. In November the unit was 350 strong, having been trained by Italian officers. On November 9, after the Allied landing in North Africa, it was learnt that the men were being sent to fight in Libya, contrary to Shedai's promises. When they refused to go and mutinied, Shedai refused to

intervene. Consequently, the Centro Militare India was disbanded. It was never revived, and thus a barrier that stood in Netaji's way toward recruitment was removed.

Transfer to German Army, the 950 Indian Regiment

In August 1942, the Legion was moved to Koenigsbrueck, a large military training center in Saxony. This had been a regular training ground for the German infantry and motorised units for decades. Here the first contingents paraded before Netaji's eyes in October, and the growth was rapid. However, the rapid expansion of the Legion also posed the problem of finances. Hitherto, payment to soldiers was being made from the monthly grants to the Free India Centre and its office. As the number of Legionaries grew, that source became insufficient. For this problem there could be but one solution: direct payment to the Legion by the Germans. This would mean hereafter that the Legionaries would receive promotions and precedence as soldiers of national socialist Germany, and would become, in fact, a regiment of the German Army, while retaining its separate name and distinction. This was agreed upon between Netaji and the German government, necessitating the taking of a formal oath of loyalty to Adolph Hitler on the part of the Legionaries. Describing the ceremony, Hugh Toye writes:

> "Five hundred Legionaries were assembled. Their German commander, Lieutenant-Colonel Krappe, addressed them, and the oath was administered by German officers to six men at a time. All was done with solemnity, the soldiers touching their officer's sword as they spoke the German words: 'I swear by God this holy oath, that I will obey the leader of the German State and people, Adolph Hitler, as Commander of the German Armed Forces, *in the fight for freedom of India, in which fight the leader is Subhas Chandra Bose, and that as a brave soldier, I am willing to lay down my life for this oath.*' Bose presented to the Legion its standard, a tricolor in the green, white and saffron of the Indian National Congress, superimposed with the figure of a springing tiger in place of the Congress spinning wheel. "Our names," he said, "will be written in gold letters in the history of free India; every martyr in this holy war will have a monument there." It was a brave,

colourful show, and for Bose, a moment of pride and emotion. "I shall lead the army," he said, "when we march to India together." The Legionaries looked good in their new uniforms, the silken banner gleaming in their midst; their drill did them credit. The Indesche legion now became the 950 Indian Regiment of the Whermacht. Netaji had learnt a truly significant lesson from this episode. Later when he would begin creating the Second INA, he would go to the people of the Indian diaspora in South Asia and ask them fervently to donate for the INA in cash, gold or jewellery. With this he paid back the Germans for their support to The Free India centre and he used these finances to raise his new formations which he strove his utmost to keep autonomous and not subject to any form of foreign control.

Hitlers visit to the Legion

A report of Hitler's visit to the Indian Legion headquarters in Dresden was given by Shantaram Vishnu Samanta (one of the Legionaries) during a press interview in India, after his release from an internment camp. According to his statement, Hitler addressed the soldiers of the Legion after Netaji had left for East Asia. He spoke in German and his speech was translated into Hindustani by an interpreter. He said:

> *"You are fortunate having been born in a country of glorious cultural traditions and a colossal manpower. I am impressed by the burning passion with which you and your Netaji seek to liberate your country from foreign domination. Your Netaji's status is even greater than mine. While I am the leader of eighty million Germans, he is the leader of 400 million Indians. In all respects he is a greater leader and a greater General than myself. I salute him, and Germany salutes him. It is the duty of all Indians to accept him as their Führer and obey him implicitly. I have no doubt that if you do this, his guidance will lead India very soon to freedom."*

A statement by another soldier of the Indian Legion, who remains anonymous, has a somewhat different version. It stated that both Netaji and Hitler took a joint salute of the Indian Legion and a German Infantry

Regiment. In addition to comments cited earlier, Hitler was reported to have made these remarks as well:

> "*German civilians, soldiers and free Indians! I take this opportunity to welcome your acting Führer, Herr Subhash Chandra Bose. He has come here to guide all those free Indians who love their country and are determined to free it from foreign yoke. It is too much for me to dare to give you any instructions or advice because you are sons of a free country, and you would naturally like to obey implicitly the accredited leader of your own land.*"

However, reports of Hitler's visit and address to the Indian Legionaries are not confirmed from any other source. If these are indeed true, they indicate what a strong impression Netaji had made on a military leader like Hitler.

Plans for Employment

What was Netaji's plan for leading this army to India? When the Germans launched out beyond Stalingrad into Central Asia, the Indian irregulars, trained at Messeritz, would accompany their Tajik and Uzbek counterparts along with the German Troops. After reaching Uzbekistan and Afghanistan the Indian Company would leap ahead of the German advance to disrupt the British-Indian defences in north-western India. Netaji spoke of dropping parachute brigades, calling on the Indian peasantry to assist them. Through radio he issued warnings to British Indian soldiers and police to the effect that unless they assisted the liberation forces they would one day have to answer to the free Indian government for their criminal support of the British. The effect of the Indian army of liberation marching into India along with the German forces would be such that the entire British Indian Army morale would collapse, coinciding with a revolutionary uprising against the British. The Legion would then be the nucleus of an expanding army of free India. Netaji's plan, largely dependent on German Military successes in the Soviet Union, undoubtedly had a setback when the Wehrmacht was halted at Stalingrad. After the German retreat from that city, the plan for marching to India from the West had to be abandoned. The tide of war was turning swiftly, calling for devising new strategies on the part of Netaji.

While the German army's second thrust into Russia encountered an unexpected counter-offensive at Stalingrad and thus was forced to turn back, in another part of the world the forces of another Axis partner were forging ahead, nearer and nearer to India. Japan was achieving spectacular successes in the Far East and was ready to welcome Netaji as the leader of millions of Indians who lived in the countries of East and South East Asia. To Netaji, the Japanese attitude was extremely encouraging. Tojo, the Prime Minister, had issued statements in the Diet about Indian freedom early in 1942, and by March there was a Japanese proposal for a tripartite declaration on India. A small band of Indian National Army legionaries had already been in existence in the South East under Japanese patronage, although a few of its leaders, including Mohan Singh, had fallen out with the Japanese.

Netaji could look back at his two years work in Germany with a sense of pride and accomplishment. Broadcasting, publications and propaganda were all extended. Azad Hind Radio had extended programs in several languages, and reports indicated that they were being heard with interest in target areas. Azad Hind, a bilingual journal, was being published regularly. There were other papers for the Legion besides the Free India Centre had attained an acknowledged status in Germany. It was treated as a Foreign Mission, entitling its members to a higher scale of rations, and exemption from some of the Aliens' regulations. Netaji himself was given a good villa, a car and special rations for entertainment purposes. His personal allowance amounted to about £800 a month. As stated earlier the monthly grant for the Free India Centre rose from £1,200 in 1941 to £3,200 in 1944. All these Netaji stipulated as a loan from the German government, to be returned after India gained independence with the Axis assistance. However, the turn of events now demanded Netaji's presence in a different theatre-of-war. Let us now take a more detailed look at how events were shaping out in the Eastern theatre where Japan was to make spectacular gains. Was India in the Japanese sights from the outset? Let us take a closer look at the Japanese decision making process.

The Japanese 64th Imperial Liaison Conference November 5, 1941

The Japanese Imperial Laison Conference was held in Tokyo on November 5, 1941. This significant Japanese Conference finalised the overall plan for the Pacific War in the Far East. Japan was being economically strangulated

by America and the allies by the economic blockade after its invasion of French Indo-China. The Japanese economy was critically dependent upon the imports of energy, minerals and raw materials. Only an unfettered supply of these could have kept the export-oriented Japanese economy going. The Japanese were feeling the heat of this American blockade. They were almost forced into the decision to lash out at the American base in Pearl Harbour and wage a grim war in the Asia-Pacific. To secure their export-oriented economy, they formulated plans for the establishment of a Co-Prosperity Sphere in South East Asia. Basically, this implied a military conquest of the European colonies in South East Asia to secure the region and ensure access to energy, mineral and raw materials to keep their economy going. These Japanese military plans however never went beyond the borders of Burma.

There were NO, repeat NO Japanese plans for the military conquest of India because they had learnt their bitter lessons from the invasion of China. That had proved to be a bottomless pit and quagmire that sucked away Japanese military resources. The Japanese however recognised the value of the critical base and military logistics support value of the British Empire in India and decided unequivocally to support the Indian Freedom Movement as that was in Japan's interest. *Japan would not involve itself militarily but do its best to stimulate a freedom movement in India by initially granting freedom to Burma, putting political pressure and mounting attacks on British Merchant Shipping*.

Bose watched all this with growing excitement and dismay increasingly feeling he was trapped in the wrong theatre of conflict. After 20 years of Non-Violent, Non-Cooperation Movement, the final phase of the freedom struggle was now officially launched.

Meeting with Hitler, May 28, 1942

As per Toyes account, Bose had finally had his meeting with the Nazi warlord Hitler himself on May 28, 1942, well over a year after he had landed in Berlin. As per Toye, this meeting was more due to pressure from Japan and Italy, Hitler's wartime allies, than on the German initiative. In the first week of May 1942, Mussolini had sent word to Hitler about a Joint Declaration in support of Indian Independence. It was perhaps this that prompted Hitler to meet Bose. As per this account, Hitler, as was his wont, launched into a long lecture on global politics. He was then at his zenith of

power and at his boastful best. Bose was miffed but he displayed great courage in talking to the warlord almost on equal terms. Forthright as he was, he pointed out his erroneous impressions about India as expressed in the Mein Kampf and also that it was a mistake to have invaded the USSR. Hitler apparently mumbled dismissively, that the comments on India had been written a long time back and in a different context. Bose then reiterated his demand that the Axsis Powers jointly commit themselves to the recognition of Indian Independence. Hitler had then taken him to the map and explained that German Forces were still far from India. As such *Germany would make no promises it could not fulfil* and that the time for declaring support for Indian Independence therefore, was still some distance away as far as Germany was concerned. Hitler apparently was a man with a closed mind and Bose soon realised the futility of reasoning with him .He came back from this meeting hugely disappointed. His entire European escape venture now seemed to be coming to an end.

German Interlude

Apart from raising the Indesche legion and setting up the Free India Centre (which made for good geo-political optics and propaganda) he had not been able to achieve anything substantive in terms of advancing the time frame of India's Independence. However, he now had the British seriously concerned and worried about what he would do next.

Bose, as per Toye and others, was thereafter a very unhappy man caught up in Europe when the fate of his country would in all probability, be decided by the military contest in the Far East. Japan, not Germany, held the keys to India's freedom and he now tried desperately to get out of Europe and locate himself closer to India. Sitanshu Das says that Bose then had an intense desire to move closer to India. For him it was an inner need, for Bose was at ease only with his countrymen. Bose was quite successful in dealing with European politicians and diplomats but it was amongst the Indians that he blossomed and felt happy. His homeland was a spiritual lodestar for this pilgrim of India's freedom.

The British were now seemingly aware of Bose's plans to move East. Bose had by now proved to be a most dangerous and able foe who had created a new military threat to the Raj by organizing Indian POWs as a military legion that would fight for the freedom of India. The British were truly alarmed. Anthony Eden himself ordered the British Ambassador in the USSR to seek a meeting with the Soviet Foreign Minister Molotov and alert him about Bose's plans, to attempt a Eurasian overland route to reach East Asia. He could move overland or attempt to fly over USSR in his quest to reach the Far East. The British pleaded with the Soviets that in no case should this be permitted. Bose must be intercepted. It is said that around this time Churchill had perhaps reiterated orders that Bose should be assassinated by the British Secret Service.

More Treachery

How were the British aware about Bose's plan to move East? One source of this leakage of course was Ultra-the British decoding machine that had cracked the German cipher codes and was now intercepting most German classified communications. The second was even more alarming. A large number of the officials in the German Foreign Ministry, especially those in the Sonderferrat Indien were plotting against Hitler. Admiral Canaris, the Head of German Intelligence (Abwehr) and Admiral Von Trott of the German Foreign Office were in touch with MI-5 and MI-6, the Double Cross Committee as also the Special Operations Executive (SOE) and the American Office of Strategic Studies (OSS) led by Donovan and Allan Dulles. Canaris and Von Trott were convinced that Hitler was a maniac and hence later they were involved in the plot to assassinate Hitler and end the war. A lot of information about Bose therefore was being leaked to the

British Intelligence. Like the earlier Ghadarite Movement in America, his orchestra in Europe seemed to be thoroughly penetrated and all the German arms, munitions, radio sets and cash sent by them to India largely fell into British hands, thanks to traitors like Talwar and some others.

What would happen to the Legion in Netaji's absence? It was now 3,500 strong, well trained and equipped, ready for action. Netaji consulted with his aides in Berlin. A.C.N. Nambiar, an Indian journalist who had been in Europe for some eighteen years prior to Netaji's arrival in Germany, was his right-hand man. While preparing for his journey to the Asian theatre-of-war, Netaji passed on to Nambiar his policy and instructions. As Hugh Toye writes:

> "There were plans for new branches of the Free India Center, for broadcasting, for Indians to study German police methods, and for the training of Indian seamen and airmen. As for the legion, it must be used actively as soon as possible, the German officers and NCOs must be quickly replaced by Indians, there must be no communalism. Legionaries were to be trained on all the most modern German equipment, including heavy artillery and tanks; Bose would send further instructions as opportunity offered."

A few words must be added regarding the Indo-German cooperation and comradeship during the critical days of World War II when the Legion was formed. Bora has described these relations as very cordial indeed. None could describe it better, he says, than Adalbert Seifriz, who was a German Officer in the training camp of the Legionaries. He writes, "Agreeing to the proposal of Bose was a magnificient concession and consideration shown to the great personality of Bose by the German Government in those critical times when all German efforts were concentrated on the war ... The mutual understanding and respect between Indians and Germans and the increasing contact between them in the interest of the common task made it possible for the Indian Legion to sustain and keep up discipline right up to the German capitulation in 1945. During the period of training and even afterwards the comradeship between Indians and Germans could not be destroyed ... A meeting with Subhas Bose was a special event for the German training staff. We spent many evenings with him, discussing the future of India. *He lives in the minds of the training staff members as an idealistic and*

fighting personality, never sparing himself in the service of his people and his country ... The most rewarding fact was the real comradeship which grew between Indians and Germans, which proved true in dangerous hours, and exists till today in numerous cases. The Indian Legion was a precious instrument in strengthening and consolidating Indo-German friendship."

Propoganda Broadcasts

As stated earlier, Bose had suggested to Ribbentrop that he should broadcast anti-British propaganda based on news from a secret radio link he had with India. This was set up and the stirring voice of Bose now sailed across the continent to the people of India. His broadcasts were rousing and contemporary and provided a telling commentary on the fast moving chain of events. He interpreted these events from an Indo centric perspective. Two of the most significant broadcasts were perhaps made on February 28, 1942 when Singapore fell to the Japanese and Bose stridently informed the Indians that the end of the empire had begun. Netaji went on air again on July 20, 1942, after the declaration of Egyptian independence by the Axsis Powers. Egypt and India, Bose said were like the two lungs of the British empire. Without Egypt the British empire would be put on just one lung-India. If this lung collapsed, the British empire would die out. The British made it a punishable offence to hear the broadcasts of Netaji but people still did so surreptitiously. They were amazed at the exploits of Bose and he raised hopes that with dedicated leaders like him around, India would surely be free and it would happen sooner than most people could imagine then.

Initially, Bose had worked almost alone with his Secretary Emily Schenkl. By January 1942, he had some 25 Indian Assistants (carefully vetted by the German Foreign Office). With these he had set up the office called the Indian Independence League or the Free India Centre. They had set to work in earnest planning the broadcast programmes of Azad Hind Radio (these had commenced in December 1941) and then formed a Planning Committee. The Irregular Company of the Indian Legion, led by N.G. Swami and Abid Hasan was raised in January 1942 at Meseritz in Brandenburg. The Lehr Regiment Brandenberg (the German Fifth Column Training Unit) was located at Meseritz. By July this unit was ready and the Germans suggested that it be sent for frontline propaganda against British Indian troops in Al Almein. Romell however refused to have either the Irregular Company or the Indesche Legion in Africa. A straight forward

combat soldier, he was not enthusiastic about the value of such irregular units sponsored by the German Foreign Ministry. An outstanding field Commander, he held the diplomats in fair contempt.

By January 1942, the Legion had reached the strength of 2,000 strong (Two Battalions). They asked for more Indian Prisoners of War. Those who had been recently captured were still in a state of shock and far easier to motivate and persuade. Having been captured in combat can be very unsettling and many of the POWs were not very willing to fight again in such highly ambiguous circumstances. The primary motivation for most was simply to survive and get back home somehow. Despite these constraints, Bose was still able to appeal to their innate nationalist instincts and raise a brigade sized force. In August 1942, the Legion moved to Koenigsbrueck, the military training centre in Saxony. Here its first battalion manoeuvred under Bose's eye in October 1942. By January 1943, the third battalion began to be raised. So far, they were being paid from Bose's monthly Foreign Office Grant. This proved insufficient and Bose had now to agree to their payment by the Germans. This entailed an oath of loyalty to Hitler. A composite kind of an oath with loyalty to Hitler as also to Bose was worked out. The Japanese Military Attache, Col. Yamamoto Satoshi accompanied Bose to the First Oath Taking Parade. Their Commander was Lt. Col. Krappe led this very impressive parade. Bose presented his Legion its standard– a tricolour with a springing Tiger in place of the Congress Charkha. They had a "Legion Day" and built up esprit de corps. Initially the Legion was to have gone to war only in or near India. By the time Bose left for the Far East, the only restriction left was that it must be used only against British Indian troops. In 1943-44, it was deployed on the French Coast to oppose the Allied landings at Normandy. After the invasion it was pulled back to Germany but had to fight its way through France with the French resistance constantly attacking it. They were brutal with the Indian prisoners. The unit however, retained its cohesion till the bitter end when it was forced to surrender. Even then some Indian soldiers tried to escape to Switzerland.

Operation Bajadere

Kingshuk Nag states that one of the most daring operations undertaken by the Legion was Op Bajadere. A crack Company of select troops from the Legion was trained by the German Brandenburgers (their Special Forces). It was subsequently parachuted into the Persian part of Baluchistan in a Green

Beret style operation designed to foment a rebellion against the British. Unfortunately, little details are available about how this parachuted company was able to perform. In all probability, the Ultra code- breaking machine may have enabled the British to get a wind of this daring operation and act against this Green Beret force before they could really do major damage. Whatever it was, Op Bajadere may provide a very valid precedent for any modern day Indian Special Forces Operation in Baluchistan and it would be highly instructive to ferret out more details. Strangely, even British sources are silent about this operation and its outcome. Subsequently, the Indian Legion units are said to have fought in France and acquitted themselves well.

Final Appraisal, the Indesche Legion

Though Bose had planned for an ultimate strength of some 10,000 men, the Indesche legion had attained a full Brigade strength by 1942. It had three Battalions and had already established a distinct, Indian corporate culture. Though it comprised Indian POWs entirely, and they came from the British ethnicity-based, racially organised regiments, Bose insisted that the new units would be All- India and All Class in composition. This was a bold and path breaking step, well ahead of its time. For the first time in history, mixed Indian units of Sikhs, Rajputs, Marathas, Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs were raised and all served happily together. It may be recalled that the Army of Free India after 1947, decided that all new Regiments raised henceforth would be on an All-India-All- Class (AIAC) basis. Thus the Guards, Parachute and Mechanised Regiments/units raised after independence were organised on this AIAC principle that had actually been pioneered by Bose. Bose set the traditions and customs for this Legion that would later be adopted whole sale by the much larger INA and then the Indian Army and all three services after independence. One of these was the salutation Jai-Hind. A word about how this was coined would be in order. This had initially been coined by Abid Hasan Safrani (The leader of the irregular company) as the battle cry of the Legion. Hasan had coined the cry-*Hindustan ki Jai*. In brainstorming sessions, Netaji had personally shortened it to Jai-Hind, now the standard salutation in the three wings of the Indian Armed Forces. The militarisation of the national anthem had been done by Bose. This had been converted into a stirring tune playable by military bands. Many Congress leaders after independence wanted Bande Mataram to be the national anthem. The British Indian Army's military musicians had

raised their hands. This slow, classical Raga like tune, simply did not lend itself to rendition by a military band. This was where the Bose inspired military band rendition of *Jana-Gana-Mana* easily qualified to be a soul stirring National Anthem of the Republic of India. Such rituals, symbols, customs and usage are a vital part of nation building and the impetus for most of these had come from the highly imaginative Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose. One drawback of the legion was that it was largely led by the Germans. The experience of raising and training the Legion however, was to stand Bose in excellent stead with the reconstitution and expansion of the INA. The first thing that Bose ensured was that the INA was led entirely by Indians and the Japanese role was purely advisory and confined to training and logistics/ordinance support. The Indesche Legion had given him full exposure to German training methods and motivational techniques. It is noteworthy that both the German and Japanese military systems relied on militant nationalism as their primary motivational credo. The simple fact is that this ensured amazing levels of combat cohesion, resilience and superlative tactical performance under high-stress combat situations. German and Japanese units were decimated in that war to the extent of 80 percent but still retained their combat cohesion. One of the main reasons was the excellent NCO cadres of these units and above all their deep and intrinsic motivation based upon a blinding love for their country. After the war, the Allies freely admitted that the German and Japanese units had performed far better at the tactical and operational art levels. It was only the disparity in overall resources that resulted from America's entry into the war (and the far greater industrial capacity of the USA), that finally tilted the scales. This was a far cry from the *Quam* and *Jati* based method of motivation of the British Indian Army.

Combat Performance

The Indesche Legion was sent to France to gain experience in coastal warfare. Reportedly it formed a part of the Atlantic Wall defences on the French Coast. Apparently Field Marshal Rommel himself had inspected the legion and was very satisfied with its performance. When the Allied Landings started in France the Germans pulled back the Legion to Germany. In this retreat, they were repeatedly attacked by the Vichy French resistance fighters, who seemed to hate them and executed and tortured many of their prisoners. The units of the Legion retained their elan and cohesion till the

very bitter end when they had no option but to surrender. Even then many of them sought to escape to neutral Switzerland. The details of the Company that was parachuted into Baluchistan are not known and hence cannot be commented upon. Bose however had learnt some very pertinent lessons from the raising and operations of the Indesche Legion. These he put to very good use once he had to reconstitute the second INA. The prime lessons learnt were:-

- The Indesche Legion was led by the Germans. Indians served only as foot soldiers. Bose was far better off in the East, where the INA was already led entirely by the Indians. The Japanese decidedly were more sincere about Indian Independence. Bose was now determined that such a force for the liberation of India must be entirely manned by Indian Officers.
- Bose did not have the finances to pay for the Legion. Hence he was forced to rely on the Germans to pay for it. This in turn required that they take an oath of Loyalty to Hitler and became virtually a part of the German Whermacht. In South East Asia, Bose made energetic attempts to get funds from the Indian diaspora to raise the INA and thereby tried to ensure a measure of complete autonomy from his Japanese allies. Whatever financial or material support that was taken was as a loan that would be paid back when India became free

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Lost Victories, the Summer of 1942

"If Japan had been in a position to invade India at this moment (August 1942), even on a limited scale as she had attempted earlier that year in April, there was every reason to believe that the story of Malaya and Burma would have been repeated."

– William Phillips
Personal representative of President Roosevelt in India

"Wartime promises made for Indian self-government need not be kept after the war has been won"

– Winston Churchill

"*My greatest regret was that Japan had missed the opportunity in 1942 to attack Northeast India."*

– Gen Tojo
In conversation with Joyce Chapman Lebra

Had the bold initiative of Subhash Bose come too late? Was Bose stuck in Europe when there was a major window of opportunity opening in the East to free India in 1942-43 with military force? Was the magnificent, subsequent effort of Bose and the INA in 1944 fore doomed to failure? Had

the tide of war turned by the time the INA intervened? Had Japan clearly overstretched itself by then?

The historical fact is that Japan and the INA had a very realistic chance of achieving near total success, had they invaded India in 1942 or even in 1943. By their hesitation, the Japanese had thrown away a golden opportunity of striking India when the British were still reeling from a string of disastrous defeats. After their successive defeats in Malaya, Singapore and Burma in 1942, the British were badly demoralised. The bogey of the unbeatable 'Japanese superman' had bitten deep into the British psyche and its rank and file were thoroughly demoralised. There were in fact, Japanese contingency plans to follow on and strike India as early as 1942 or 1943. It would have been a bold and high-risk operation but one that had an outstanding chance of achieving success, simply out of all proportion to the force levels that would then have been employed. India might well have been freed had Bose shifted to South East Asia in 1942 itself and had led his INA in an invasion of India. Unfortunately, he was forced to cool his heels in Europe.

The, Nazi warlord Adolf Hitler, was distinctly cool towards the idea of supporting Indian Independence. The Nazi regime kept Bose waiting for months before his meeting with Ribbentrop materialised. He had in fact waited for over a year before he could get an audience with Hitler. That he was granted these unprecedented audiences at the highest level of the Nazi hierarchy is a tribute to the power of the charismatic personality of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose. Bose, however, was rather ill at ease in Europe. Even though he maintained the dignity and decorum of his office in Germany, he was ill at ease with the Europeans and preferred to deal with his own people.

In the East, however, the Japanese were extremely keen to bring Bose. The rank and file of the INA had informed them that it was only Bose who could infuse new life into the idea of the INA and galvanise it into action. He was a highly charismatic leader and if he arrived on the scene, the Indian troops and the people of the Indian diaspora in South East Asia, would follow him most enthusiastically. Had Bose been permitted to move out from Germany in 1942 itself–the course of history may well have been radically different. How? What different shape could events have taken in 1942? It is worth exploring this line of speculation to understand what a close call it had been in the summer of 1942.

The Situation in 1942

Japanese operational plans for South East Asia had been generally crystallised in the Imperial Conference on November 05, 1941. They had decided to undertake the "Southern Drive" to take the area that generally conformed to the co-prosperity sphere. This entailed the capture of Malaya, Singapore and Burma. This did not go beyond the borders of Burma and though these plans did take into account India's vital role as a forward military base for British war effort, there were no operational plans whatsoever, to invade India. The fact is that there were many competing centres of power in Japan. Unlike Nazi Germany or Mussolini's Italy, it was not a one party state. The Japanese Army, the Japanese Navy and the Foreign Office had divergent interests and views. As far back as July 26, 1940 when Japan's basic national policy was spelt out (during Prince Kinoye's Prime Ministership) Japan's interest in India had always been peripheral. It wanted to weaken the British power in India without direct military involvement. It had overreached itself in China and was not prepared to get stuck in another gigantic quagmire in India. In the face of American economic strangulation, Japan was thinking more in terms of securing the input of basic raw materials by establishing the co-prosperity sphere. It was prepared to commit military force only for the southern drive.

Conference of July 04, 1941

The conflicting views of the Japanese Army and Navy were finally harmonised in the Conference on July 04, 1941. They agreed on a policy favouring the Southern Drive (preferably without risking US intervention in the ensuing hostilities with the old colonial powers) in South and South East Asia. At that stage itself, the Japanese Imperial HQ was relatively cautious and had no intentions of expanding the Southern Drive beyond the borders of Burma. Traditionally, the Japanese Army had focused on Korea, Manchuria, China and the Soviet Union. South East Asia was a new responsibility and Burma an unknown land. For India itself, there was much goodwill in intellectual circles but little direct knowledge of the country.

The Japanese Operational Directive of July 27, 1941

The Japanese Operational Directive of July 27, 1941 sought an early end to the endless war in China, which was seen as a bottomless quagmire. India

figured only indirectly and in an implied manner as the source of British strength in the East. Britain's Indian Base (of manpower and resources) would have to be weakened to eliminate the British offensive threat from this base to the co-prosperity sphere. However, no military operations were envisaged at that stage for this purpose.

The Total War Institute of Japan

The Total War Institute of Japan had included India as part of the concentric circles, each encompassing groups of Asian countries to forge an enlarged Co-prosperity Region. As per the thinking in this institute, India was to be an independent country with strong economic, defence and foreign policy bonds with post-war Japan.

Attack on Pearl Harbour

On December 08, 1941, after the failure of the US-Japan talks to end the economic strangulation of that country, Japan lashed out militarily on the US forward base in the Pacific Ocean. The attack seemingly achieved complete surprise. The entire battleships of the US Navy Fleet were deployed in forward locations at Pearl Harbour and these were sunk in the sudden, catastrophic attack by Japanese Naval aviation. Providentially, the US Aircraft Carriers escaped as they were not based in Pearl Harbour. Carrier borne naval aviation had made a stunning debut in the Pacific and the Japanese Navy had pioneered this concept with devastating efficacy.

The Southern Drive

The Japanese Southern Drive that followed in Malaya, Singapore and Burma was equally successful. The British Warships HMS Repulse and Prince of Wales were sunk by aircraft's from the Japanese Carriers. Malaya had fallen in December 1941–January 1942 and Singapore fell in February 1942. The Japanese invaded Burma in rapid succession and Rangoon had fallen in March 1942. The stunning and rapid success of the Japanese Army had created massive demoralisation in the British ranks and created the bogey of the Japanese superman who could not be beaten in jungle warfare.

The only discordant note that came later was the Naval battles of Coral Sea and Midway that took place in May-June 1942. Japan lost these carrier battle groups based engagements entirely as a result of the breaking of the

cipher codes being used by the Japanese since 1930 by the Enigma machine. This intelligence windfall had changed the fortunes of war in that critical period as the naval military balance in the Pacific turned against Japan. Japan however was still riding high on the wave of a series of spectacular military successes on the ground in Asia.

The Japanese Southern Army, under Count, Field Marshal Hisaichi Terauchi had achieved its objectives well ahead of schedule. By March 1942, the British were driven out of Burma, well before the rains had started. A clear opportunity now presented itself for the Japanese to follow up this spectacular success by a quick foray into India. Such a swift follow up attack would have achieved two objectives:-

- It would pre-empt a British attack on Burma and thus protect the new Co-prosperity Sphere of Japan.
- It would also block British-American supplies to Generalissimo Chiang Kai Shek's Armies in China and block his Army from India by cutting off the Burma Road and also some of the air bases that supplied the hump route.

There was total collapse and demoralisation then in the British Camp. *Col. Hayashi Akira of the staff in the Southern Army now proposed a swift dash to capture Dimapur and Tinsukhia in Assam*. He correctly estimated *that there was absolutely nothing to stop the Japanese Army if it had followed up its success in Burma and entered the plains of Assam in the summer of 1942*. About 100,000 Indians had died in the racially organised escape from Burma. The British administration had withdrawn from Chittagong to Feni (in what is now Bangladesh). There was complete and total panic. In the East Bengal districts the terrified British administration destroyed all the small country crafts and boats, which were the mainstay of the local transport system of the hinterland. These were destroyed to deny the Japanese the existing facility of local riverine transport. So terrified were the British of an Imperial Japanese invasion that they undertook this virtual scorched earth policy. This panic destruction of the riverine transport system in East Bengal had a very tragic fallout. It led to the massive Bengal famine of 1942, which caused the death of some three million Indians.

In the hot summer of 1942, therefore, there was a massive influx of Allied troops of a variety of nationalities into India. This influx was

stretching India's economic and social fabric to the breaking point. This also contributed to the famine and there was general panic and collapse of morale. There were unmistakable signs of panic in Vishakhapatanam and parts of Madras.

The Japanese were clearly sensing an opportunity.

- Thus on April 04, 1942, Prime Minister Tojo spoke of military activities in India at a meeting of the Imperial Conference.
- *On April 05 and 09 1942* the Japanese Carrier based naval aircraft's attacked Colombo Harbour and the British fleet's Trincomalee base. Unfortunately, the British fleet under Admiral Sir James Somerville had a narrow escape and he managed to slip away with his fleet just before this attack. The Japanese now bombed Madras, Visakhapatnam and Kakinada. There was complete panic. The resultant exodus indicated the atmosphere of collapse and pessimism. The Governor of Madras reported to the Viceroy that this exodus exhibited a complete absence of will amongst the people in general to resist the Japanese. The Director, Intelligence Bureau in India had also reported of defeatism and the possible need to deploy military for internal security duties.
- *On April 22, 1942* the Japanese Foreign Affairs Ministry signalled to its Embassy in Berlin to get Bose out and send him to Japan. This message from the Gaimusha (Foreign Office) to Ambassador Oshima in Berlin was intercepted and decoded by Enigma, and alerted the British to Bose's plans to escape again. An Italian aircraft was to do the non-stop flight from Europe to the Far East in July 1942. It was thought that Bose would attempt to get out of Berlin by air or land route. This was the time when the British Foreign Ministry appealed to Moscow to prevent the escape of Bose by air/land routes to the Far East. Churchill in fact had already issued instructions for his assassination after his first escape. They knew of Bose's plan to escape again and tried their best now to block him. Amazingly it took the Germans 13 months before they finally agreed to send Bose by a perilous three months long submarine voyage to Japan losing precious time in the bargain.

The Japanese were now getting quite disturbed with Hitler's obsession with the Russian campaign and the German Navy's inability to destroy the British Mediterranean Fleet and break out of the Suez Canal into the Indian

Ocean Region (IOR). That would have helped the Japanese Navy, which was coming under pressure in the Pacific-Indian Ocean Region (IOR).

The situation in South Asia however can be summed up in the words of Mahatma Gandhi. In April 1942, Gandhi wrote to Horace Alexander, "*My firm opinion is that the British should leave India now in an orderly manner and not run the risk of what they did in Singapore, Malaya and Burma. Britain cannot defend India, much less defend herself on Indian soil with any strength. The best thing she can do is to leave India to her fate.*" At this juncture, Bose felt that the circumstances were especially propitious for a determined bid for creating a liberated zone across the Indian borders either in North East India, the Arakans or the Chittagong Division of Bengal. The British administration had already pulled back from Chittagong into Feni and begun destroying the local civil crafts in utter and unseemly panic. Thus, at this critical juncture in the war, Gandhijis views had taken a complete about turn and were now aligned very closely with those of Bose.

US Apprehension

India had now become the Allied Forward Base of what President Roosevelt considered the crucial China-Burma-India theatre of war and also the main base of the operations against Japan in the Indo-Pacific region. India's importance as a strategic base was one reason why Roosevelt pressed the British Prime Minister in 1941-42 for a policy that would enlist Congress' support for the Allies in India. Meanwhile, Churchill contrived at the failure of the Cripps Mission in India, simply wanted to get Roosevelt off his back. Even General Issimo Chiang Kai Shek supported the Indian leaders but both Linlithgow and Amerey were dismissive of his demand. The famine now broke out in Bengal. Mahatma Gandhi's views were now sharply veering towards those of Bose. He had realised belatedly that Bose was right. Nehru and Azad were more inclined to go along with the British, even as Gandhi veered towards Bose's views. Nehru in fact had once suggested that in case Bose joined a Japanese invasion of India, he would personally go to fight them.

As stated earlier, on April 04, 1942 itself, Prime Minister Tojo had declared in the Japanese Diet (Parliament) that "it has been decided to strike a decisive blow against British military power and military establishment in India." In his April 06, 1942 broadcast over Azad Hind Radio, Bose had welcomed Tojo's historic declaration.

The Japanese Operations 10 and 21

The Japanese now drew up contingency operational plans for a foray into the Assam plains. These were code named Operation 10 and Operation 21. The plans were ready by August 22, 1942. The bold and high risk Japanese military orientation now clearly began to falter. Japan hesitated. The experience of the endless quagmire in China had really imposed caution. Japan thereby missed a golden opportunity to go to India in the summer of 1942 itself before the monsoon started. Even though it dithered and missed the first window of opportunity in the summer of 1942, it could have, subsequently, still launched Operation 21 after the monsoons and the time was becoming opportune for this. In fact, the situation had become most favourable in August 1942 as a result of the Quit India Movement.

Quit Indian Movement, August1942

To placate the Americans who were pressurising Britain to make up with the Congress, Churchill had sent the Cripps Mission in early April 1942 with a virtual plan for the partition of India. This was rejected by the Congress. Secretary of State L.S. Amerey felt that Nehru and Azad would break with Gandhi and help the British in their war against Japan despite the Congress' rejection of the Cripps proposals in April 1942. In fact, Nehru had told a meeting at Guwahati on April 24, 1942 that he would "fight Mr. Subhash Bose and his party along with Japan, if he comes to India." Azad was noticing a clear hardening of Mahatma Gandhi's position and how he was veering around completely to Netaji's point of view on how India should fight for its freedom.

Gandhi now openly admired Bose's courage in escaping to Germany. Gandhi felt the time had come to "Do or Die". Despite reservations expressed by Nehru, Azad and others, he insisted on launching the Quit India Movement. In fact Gandhijis' draft resolution sent to the Congress Working Committee had demanded immediate cessation of British Rule in India. This was precisely the position that Bose had urged him to take in his last meeting in the Wardha session in 1940. Miffed by Gandhis new found truculence, the British had apparently been working on Nehru. Amerey, the British Secretary of State had in fact said, "*There is reasonable hope that the Congress led by Nehru will at any rate try to help in its own curious fashion in opposing Japanese aggression*" (Sitanshu Das, p.520). Nehru and Azad,

however, initially quailed at such a level of collaboration. They were still in awe of Gandhiji and finally they went along with him to launch the Quit India Movement in August 1942. The August 04, 1942 Congress Working Committee (CWC) Resolution was forced to take a hardline position. It asked for immediate cessation of British Rule in India. Churchill was furious. As Bose had noted, restlessness was spreading in India. The CWC could not have continued with the policy of drift after the British War Cabinet refused to improve upon the Cripps proposal which the Congress had rejected. So, the Quit India Movement was launched. Gandhi was arrested and his last message was, "We get our Freedom or we Die (*Karo ya Maro*)."

Churchill was livid. He was always full of venom against the "beastly Indians and their beastly religion". He told the British Cabinet, "We must not sell India to the Hindu priesthood and the Congress caucus." Churchill in fact was ready to lose India temporarily to the Axis invaders rather than concede dominion status to "non-white" India. It is noteworthy that Nehru, Azad, Rajgopalachary, Sarojini Naidu, Syed Muhammad and Asif Ali, all members of the CWC had expressed reservations about the Quit India Resolution. Because of Mahatma Gandhi's prestige and stature, they were forced to go along. The British displayed no qualms or reservations however, in crushing this movement as brutally as they could. Gandhiji's fasts were now of no avail. Churchill hated him anyway and was not bothered if he passed away in prison.

Military Reaction to Quit India Movement

In August 1942, to suppress the Quit India Movement of Mahatma Gandhi, the British used a total of eight Brigades with about 57 battalions for a period of 6 to 8 weeks. These were all white troops of British or allied extraction. Viceroy Linlithgow reported to Churchill that "*this was the most serious rebellion since 1857, the gravity of which we have so far concealed from the world due to reasons of military security.*" To aid this revolt, Bose had sent gold, US dollars, radio sets and arms to India. Talwar and his gang of traitors however, left most of these at the Soviet Embassy in Kabul. This was not given to the associates of Bose and the money was divided between Talwar and the Kirti/CPI workers (Sitanshu Das). The Quit India Movement thus entirely petered out. All the Congress leadership was put in jail and draconian wartime censorship ensured that the Freedom Movement was

completely deprived of the oxygen of media publicity. Within two months, it was all over for the Quit India Movement of the Congress bar the shouting. The British had been brutal and ruthless and the Non-Violent Movement collapsed entirely in the face of such draconian and repressive measures. In the face of a brutal and determined military power, non-violence had unfortunately failed entirely for it is primarily directed at a *status–quo* regime with some humanist and liberal values. As an American military writer put it recently faced with a Stalinist kind of ruthless repression, "Gandhi dies" before a firing squad or in a brutal Gulag. So does the Gandhian form of mass mobilisation and non-violent protest lack efficacy? The simple fact is that in the post war period Gandhian methods were followed by Martin Luther King in the United States itself with great success. The counterpoint is that the USA is a liberal democracy. Would this have worked in Stalin's Soviet Union or Hitler's Germany? Such mass mobilisations and non-violent protests however were repeated later in Eastern Europe via a series of Spring Revolutions. Then we had the coloured revolutions in Europe and Central Asia and elsewhere and then of course came the Arab Spring. In all these cases the ruling regimes were relatively not as tyrannical and ruthless and a collapse of the political economies of these countries had weakened the ruling dispensations and had led to wide spread disaffection and unrest, not just in the masses but in the police, military and other security agencies as well, were fairly demoralised. In recent times, Information Technology has facilitated mass-mobilisation at a hitherto unprecedented pace. Internet and text messages can generate huge "Flash–mobs" in a matter of days and hours. But how lasting are these effects? The Arab Spring in Egypt has since been reversed and the Army is back in charge. The jury however is still out on this larger issue.

Let's now go back to the era of World War II to see how events panned out then. Let us not forget that during Churchill's period, India was faced with a rather ruthless regime that was at war, and had not batted an eyelid as 3 million Indians died of starvation, even as it destroyed all boats and country crafts in the riverine terrain of Bangladesh to prevent a Japanese invasion via the sea. It had also used some eight brigades of white troops to brutally suppress Mahatma Gandhi's Quit India Movement. This was not a dispensation that would understand the language of Non-violence.

Allied Military Dispositions in India

Meanwhile, the Japanese Operation 21 plan had been finalised and committed to writing by August 22, 1942. The British attempt to crush the Quit India Movement using white troops alone, had dangerously upset the balance of the Allied Forces in India. Over 57 Battalions or some eight Brigades (five divisions) comprising 57,000 men were committed for these Internal Security operations. Had Japan struck then, it could well have been a walkover in North East India and Assam. The British Forces were not ready to face a Japanese invasion, especially one via Assam as they were primarily expecting a Japanese invasion via sea in the Chittagong sector. The British Army in Burma had retreated entirely to Manipur. Field Marshal Wavell had abandoned the Chittagong Port and destroyed the local country craft. He had two corps and had deployed them as under:-

- 70 British Division at the mouth of Hooghly River
- 23 Indian Division and one Brigade in Assam
- 14 Indian Division
- 26 Indian Division

The defences were thus mainly poised to face a Japanese invasion from the sea, primarily in East Bengal. The North East was covered very lightly. A sudden Japanese thrust towards Assam to seize the railheads at Tinsukhia and Dimapur would have succeeded brilliantly. The Japanese Air Force was still a force to be reckoned with and the Japanese Navy was not under serious pressure as it would later be in 1944 when the Indian invasion was finally launched.

American Apprehensions

William Philips, the personal representative of President Roosevelt in India informed the US President about the August Quit India movement-"if Japan had been in a position to invade India at this moment, even on a limited scale as she had attempted earlier that year in April, there was every reason to believe that the story of Malaya and Burma would have been repeated." White troops had been deployed on a large scale to suppress a rebellion within India. Apart from Police forces, some eight Army brigades with over 57 battalions of white troops were engaged full time for internal security duties and they would not have been available then, had Japan attacked

India in autumn 1942. It was in fact the very best window of opportunity to attack and throw the British out of India.

Japan had thus wasted two golden opportunities in 1942, one in the summer of 1942 when it completed its Burma operation well ahead of schedule and had a clear window of opportunity to attack before the monsoon began. Its second opportunity came in August 1942, when the Quit India Movement sucked away about 35,000 troops towards Internal Security duties and the British military deployment was more oriented to face a Japanese assault from the sea on undivided Bengal. In the bargain, it had destroyed all local boats and created a famine in Bengal that killed about 3 million Indians. *This amounted to genocide for the British continued to export grain from India to supply their troops in other theatres, right through this famine*. A sudden Japanese attack towards Assam to seize the railheads of Tinsuhkia and Dimapur would have altered the course of history in Asia. This invasion would have succeeded beyond all expectations and generated the revolt in India that Bose had foreseen so clearly. In fact Lt. Gen. Kuroda Shigetoku, the Chief of Staff of Japans' Southern Army based in Singapore had admitted as much, after the war. Gen. Tojo had said to Joyce Chapman Lebra in spring 1945, that his greatest regret was that Japan had missed the opportunity in 1942.

In hindsight, it is now clear, that the Japanese hesitated for two main reasons. One was the Mohan Singh episode and the internal sabotage of the first INA by secret British Indian operatives and agent provocateurs that will be covered in detail in the next Chapter. The second was the major weakness of logistics in supporting such an offensive. The Japanese supply route over Northern Burma was a logistical nightmare. It was to prove the Achilles heel of the ultimate Japanese invasion that finally took place, after uncharacteristic hesitation, only in 1944.

The pity was that Bose was still stuck in Europe. The British Intelligence had instigated a mutiny in the First INA of Gen. Mohan Singh to help stave off the impending Japanese invasion. The Japanese hesitation in 1942 and 1943 was to prove fatal. India had been so close to freedom through military means and yet this historic opportunity was wasted due to sudden Japanese over-caution and hesitation as also an instigated rebellion in the first INA of Gen. Mohan Singh.

4

The First INA, Raising the Force

> *"A measure of courage cannot be denied to the leaders of INA frontline units when they faced upto British equipment, tanks, guns and aircraft with rifles and bullock carts and empty stomachs"*
>
> – GHQ (India) Intelligence Summary

Roots of Japanese Interest in India

Buddhism links the ancient civilisations of India and Japan in historical bonds that date back to the Fifth century AD. Buddhism came to Japan along the Silk Road. As per the Book of Liang, five Buddhist monks from Gandhara had brought Buddhism to Japan in 467 AD. Today about 34 percent of Japanese are Buddhists. The three main schools of Buddhism are Pure Land (Amida) Buddhism, Nichiren and the Shingen schools of Buddhism. Zen, especially Rinzai and Soto schools of Zen are popular in Japan and have deeply influenced Japanese philosophy and thinking. These trace their inspiration from the Maha Mudra doctrines of Buddhism enunciated by Nagarjun the Chancellor of Nalanda University in ancient India. In recent history, the Japanese interest in India preceded the 1905 Russo-Japan War. In December 1907, Kakuzo Okakura, once the curator of the Imperial Japanese Art Museum and one of the founders of the Tokyo School of Art, along with his friend Shikuto Hori had travelled with Swami Vivekananda's disciple, Josephine McLeod to India. They arrived in Calcutta in January 1902. They travelled with Swami Vivekananda to Bodhgaya and Varanasi. Okakura rekindled Japanese interest in India. He brought to

contemporary Indian nationalism a new vision of pan-Asianism. His book "Ideal of the East" profoundly influenced many nationalist Indian leaders like Lala Lajpat Rai. There were also Japanese artists who inspired Indian artists like Abanindranath Tagore who were then engaged in propagating an Indian school of Art.

The Ghadar Party

In 1912, a group of Indian revolutionaries who had been prevented from agitation in India had found a safe field of activity amongst Indian settlers in the West Coast of USA. In San Francisco, they founded a newspaper 'The Ghadar' (Revolution), which was distributed to the large Indian communities of the Pacific ports and regularly smuggled into India. In 1914, the Ghadarites were able to induce several thousand Sikhs to return home and create trouble for the British. Despite precautions taken by the government, many reached Punjab with the aim of triggering a revolt against the British. Even as they landed in India, war broke out in Europe. The British had information about this movement and the Gadar project failed dismally.

The Ghadar Party leadership now moved to Berlin. They formed the Indian Revolutionary Society that used the German diplomatic posts in Shanghai, Batavia and the USA to induct and assist their agents in India. One of the most prominent of these revolutionaries was Rash Bihari Bose. Bose had earlier been involved in hatching plots to assassinate the Viceroy, Lord Hardinge in 1912. The Germans made a determined bid to instigate rebellion in India and prevent British and Indian forces from being moved out of India towards the various theatres of that war. Unfortunately, the (British) Indian Intelligence Bureau (IB) had thoroughly penetrated these groups. The IB knew of their moves well in advance and was completely able to foil plots to induct arms and ammunition and instigate a rebellion. Rash Bihari Bose's plans to spark a revolt in the Punjab were foiled.

Rash Bihari Bose now escaped to Shanghai. Here he assisted the Germans in two other plans for an Indian Revolution in 1915. In fact, there was a German Plan in the First World War to raise an Indian Revolutionary Force to march to India from the East, much like the manner the INA would do later during Second World War. Unfortunately, the IB had so thoroughly penetrated the Ghadar Movement that they had advance notice of all their plans and each one of them was foiled.

In 1916, Rash Bihari Bose had to flee to Japan. He came under the protection of Toyama, the Head of the secret Black Dragon Society. He was powerful enough to defy the Japanese Government's efforts to arrest and deport Rash Bihari Bose to India. Later Rash Bihari Bose married Toyama's daughter and became a Japanese citizen. He founded the Japanese Branch of Congress "Indian Independence League", which was still active in 1941 and helped raise the first INA and lay the grounds for the second.

Meanwhile, back in 1915, the Ghadar revolutionaries had set up a Provisional Government of India in Kabul with active German support. They had tried hard to motivate some of the Indian Princes to join the anti-British crusade but failed. The problem was the extent to which the Ghadar movement had been penetrated by the British Intelligence. Most of the German arms and ammunition, radio sets and cash and gold were intercepted or captured. In India, hundreds of revolutionaries were imprisoned and transported. Many other were forced to escape to sanctuaries in Far East as Rash Bihari Bose had done.

The Ghadar Society in the USA was neutralised when the USA actively joined that war on the Allied Side. The struggle of the Ghadar revolutionaries had completely failed to divert British or Indian troops to Internal Security tasks. India, in fact sent out a staggering 1.3 million soldiers for that war. The Ghadarite revolution had been so comprehensively penetrated by the British Indian IB that all its plans to instigate a revolt had failed dismally. In the 1930s another wave of Indian refugees left as a result of the political struggle in India. Many of them took refuge in Bangkok, which soon became a major centre of Indian discontent. British influence in Siam could not neutralise this. It was this centre of Indian anger and unrest that the Japanese Intelligence now tried its best to exploit in 1941.

Japan had not thought of doing so initially, because of the outspoken hostility of the Indian National Congress to the Japanese invasion of China. This seemed to rule out the possibility of using Indian nationalism to support its war effort. However in June 1941, Japan planned to use Burmese revolutionaries to support the invasion of Burma. This was the time when Giani Pritam Singh approached the Japanese Embassy in Bangkok with an offer of help from the Indian nationalists. He sought their support to free India. The Japanese Intelligence was deeply interested. The Indian diaspora community in South East Asia then was over 3 million strong and could provide significant help to the impending Japanese operations.

Fujiwara Kikan: A Japanese "Lawrence of India"

The Japanese Army Intelligence now raised the Fujiwara Kikan (F-Kikan) in autumn 1941. Fujiwara was a young and dedicated Japanese Intelligence Officer, who was highly supportive of the idea of India's freedom. He later rose to be a Lt. Gen. He gathered a small band of five translators and officers and set to work. His mission was loosely defined and flexible and hence he had been given considerable latitude and initiative. Even though the Imperial General HQ had at best thought of espionage, information gathering and destabilisation of the military base in India, Fujiwara Kikan displayed tremendous initiative and went ahead to actively support the Freedom Movement in India.

In autumn 1941, Rash Bihari Bose had gone to the Imperial General HQ for consultation, but got no commitment towards the Indian freedom struggle. The 8th Section of the Japanese Army's Second Bureau had not made any intelligence work/ subversion plans beyond the designed Co-prosperity sphere limits. India was not given similar attention, because at that time there simply were no Japanese plans to proceed beyond Burma.

In October 1941, the Japanese Army attaché in Bangkok, Col. Tamura introduced the Fujiwara Kikan to Gyani Pritam Singh. Pritam Singh was an Indian patriot and Secretary General of the Indian Independence League of Thailand and British Malaya. There were about 8,00,000 Indians in British Malaya. Fujiwara instantly understood that the Gyani might help him obtain the cooperation of the Indian community in the invasion of Malaya. He could also perhaps help him win over some Indian troops. Fujiwara rushed to Bangkok and set up shop with a handful of interpreters and Intelligence officials to work with the nine Indians recruited by Pritam Singh. It was from this group that the Independent League of India later emerged. This was the group that would later win over Capt. Mohan Singh and other Indian officers and men of the 1/14 Punjab Regiment of the Indian Army. This in fact was how the nucleus of the First INA was formed.

At the very first meeting with Fujiwara, Pritam Singh had asked him to bring Subhash Bose. Later, Fujiwara was to receive similar requests from the captured Indian military personnel. He conveyed this to the Imperial General HQ. Pritam Singh and Fujiwara discussed at length and then signed a Note. Articles 1 and 2 of this Note spoke of:-

- The completely independent and free countries of Japan and Indian Independence League (IIL) would welcome on equal terms the comprehensive support of Japan.
- Japan would guarantee that it had no territorial, military, political, economic, cultural and religious designs and demands on India.
- Article 4 spelt out what the IIL would do to help Japan in the event of an Anglo-Japanese War. IIL would advance with the Japanese Army in Southern Thailand and Malaya to try and extend the influence over the area and persuade the Indians residing in those areas and the Indians serving with the British Indian Army to join the anti-British Movement. It would help to create a pro-Japanese atmosphere amongst the Indians.
- The Japanese will help to facilitate liaison between IIL and Bose in Berlin.

Another leading light of the IIL was Swami Satyananda Puri who worked with Rash Bihari Bose.

AM Nair of the IIL was in Manchuria. He was cooperating with the Kwantung Army. He was called to the Kwantung Army Staff HQ and told of the operations in Singapore and the sinking of the British battleships HMS Prince of Wales and Repulse. Nair thereupon went to Shanghai to organise the Indians there. He then went to Tokyo and met the Japanese Army Chief, Field Marshal Sugiyama and Rash Bihari Bose. Even at that stage, Imperial General HQ seemed cool to the idea of bringing Subhash Bose as he had apparently quarrelled with Gandhi and Nehru. Besides, their operational plans did not yet include India. At that stage their interests were confined to obtaining the support of the huge expat Indian population in South East Asia and espionage forays into India.

Japanese Offensive in Malaya, December 1941- January 1942

Maj. Gen. Kiani, later the GOC of one of the INA Divisions under Netaji Subhash Bose has left behind an excellent eyewitness account of the Blitzkrieg style Japanese invasion of Malaya. Kiani was then a Captain in the famous 1/14 Punjab Regiment. This was later to produce famous personalities like Capt. (later General) Mohan Singh, Commander of the

First INA and later Mohammad Ayub Khan, the first Military Dictator of Pakistan.

Kiani was then posted as a GSO, 3 Intelligence in the HQ of 11 Infantry Division of Malaya. Malaya was then under the command of Gen. Percival. Its defences were manned by the British Three Corps under Lt. Gen. Heath. It had under command the 9th Indian Division and the 11th Indian Division. Besides, a contingent of the Australian Expeditionary Force was deployed in the South and East Coast of Malaya. The entire plan for the defence of Malaya was mired in confusion from the very beginning. It was anticipated that the Japanese attack could come via Thailand, which was then neutral. It was anticipated that the Japanese would land at Suigora and other places in Southern Thailand (near the Isthmus of Kra). There was a highly ambitious plan for a brigade worth of 11 Indian Division to lunge into Thailand (under the grandiose sounding Op Matdor) to oppose the landings and delay the Japanese advance into Malaya. The main defence line was being held by 11 Indian Division in North Malaya at Jitre (where the 1/14 Punjab was deployed). The problem was the complete confusion and indecision prevailing in the British High Command in Malaya (under Gen. Wavell) and the War Office in London. They were hesitant to violate Thai neutrality and build up a Magniot like defence line in North Malaya. The result was a stream of confusing orders and counter orders.

The Japanese Blitzkrieg in Malaya

The Japanese Blitzkrieg in Malaya began on December 08, 1941, under the command of Gen. Yamashita (nicknamed 'Tiger'). The Japanese carrier based aircrafts rapidly gained complete control of the air. The sleek Zero fighters totally outclassed the lumbering British Buffalo Brewster fighters based in Malaya. News was received that two Japanese ships convoys were moving South in the Gulf of Siam. It was felt they were going to attack and capture Thailand (even as they had earlier taken French Indo-China). The Japanese carrier based naval aviation was formidable. Along with the Japanese Air Force from the land bases, they destroyed the British planes and gained complete mastery of the air. The Japanese fighter bombers torpedoed and sank the mighty British battleships HMS Price of Wales and HMS Repulse. They then effected swift landings in Southern Thailand and raced towards Malaya. The British Brigade sent to slow down their advance

failed miserably. The British and Indian troops were completely road bound, while the Japanese operated freely in the dense jungles to make deep outflanking moves. Time and again they laid roadblocks in the rear and cut off and isolated the Allied Units. They rapidly reconstructed the bridges that the allies had blown up while retreating.

The assault on the main Jitre line was led by Japanese tanks. They tore through it like a knife through butter. No cohesive defence could be put up by the 11th and 9th Indian Divisions. All their defence lines were bypassed either by outflanking moves through the dense jungles or by landings on the East Coast of Malaya in simple country crafts (which the allies had failed to destroy). In two months the British and Australian forces were pushed about 500 miles across Malaya and driven into the southern port city of Singapore. By January 1942, the entire British forces were bottled up in Singapore Island and had blown up the Jehore causeway. The Japanese artillery soon got it into range and air attacks commenced. There was a complete collapse of British morale. The 11th Indian Division was wiped out in North and Central Malaya and its remnants were now merged with the 9th Indian Division. On February 14, 1942, the Malay High Command called a conference and decided to surrender Singapore unconditionally on February 17, 1942. Gen. Yamashita took the surrender of Gen. Percyval's Malaya Command.

The British had rushed in reinforcement towards the end. These did not delay the Japanese advance. The Japanese 5th Imperial Guards Division just sliced through Malaya. The reinforcements only added to the number of prisoners in the Japanese bag. About 80,000 troops in total surrendered in Singapore. Almost 50,000 of these prisoners were Indians. The British and Indian prisoners of war (POWs) were separated. The British told the Indians that henceforth they would take their orders from the Japanese. They were shocked and dumbfounded at this abandonment.

Mohan Singh's Surrender

It is noteworthy that at the very start of the Japanese offensive, 1/14 Punjab had been deployed on the Jitre line to guard the approach to North Malaya. It was attacked by Japanese tanks and the battalion was split. Most of the unit fled into the jungle. This was where Pritam Singh met Capt. Mohan Singh and talked him to surrendering.

The two men talked at length for hours. Pritam then took the two Indian officers to meet Major Iwaichi Fujiwara. Fujiwara was the Japanese "Lawerence of Arabia". He was exuberant and enthusiastic and told the Indians that the Japanese were determined to crusade against the colonial powers. They wanted to establish a Greater Co-prosperity Sphere, which would ensure "Asia for the Asiatics". He really swayed the Indians. Pritam Singh now appointed Mohan Singh as the head of the armed component of the IIL and exhorted him to save the lives of Indian soldiers now fleeing in the jungles. Collection centres were set up behind the rapidly advancing Japanese lines, where Indian POWs were collected. Soon the Indians began to trickle in and Mohan Singh started work on raising a military force for the Indian Independence League (IIL), sponsored by the Japanese. Thus, the foundations of the First INA were laid.

When Singapore fell, the Japanese handed over to Capt. Mohan Singh all the 45,000 Indian POWs captured there. His organisation catered for their immediate needs. He set to work to persuade them to join the fledgling INA. His team of volunteers went to all the Indian POW camps and spoke of British exploitation and racial bias and the need to free India. Gen. Kiani writes that they were fairly successful. However, Mohan Singh did face some initial problems. The Indian troops were dazed and disoriented. They had been let down badly by their British leadership and had lost the battle. Naturally many were then demoralised and intent on self-preservation. They were not keen to get involved in further fighting in such an ambiguous situation of flux and change.

Anointed Leader, The Limitations

General Mohan Singh was an unknown quantity. He was relatively a junior officer with an average service record and had little combat experiences or military exploits to boast of. His political experience was nil. He had been the somewhat arbitrary and impulsive choice of Giani Pritam Singh, who had little idea of the hierarchical nature of military organisations. Officers senior to him naturally resented being placed under his command and questioned his credentials for leadership of the Force. At the very least, an Indian officer of Lt. Col. or Colonel rank should have been selected. It had been a rather hasty and impulsive decision by Giani Pritam Singh to anoint Mohan Singh arbitrarily as the commander of the INA. Maj. Fujiwara had gone along with the Giani because he was very keen to get the Indian project

going and a beginning had to be made somewhere. Mohan Singh was a matter of chance and a strange destiny. Mohan Singh initially tended to place relatively junior Sikh officers in command over the heads of those who had been their seniors. Thus while raising the First INA Brigade, he appointed the Senior Subedar Majors as Brigade and Battalion Commanders and asked the Indian officers to serve as their staff officers. This disruption of the established chain of command did have a destabilising impact on the organisation giving it the air of whimsicality. This violation of the chain of command and seniority principle, naturally led to resentment. Despite these rather severe limitations however, it must be said in all fairness, that Capt. Mohan Singh did rather well to begin with. Subsequently however, the British Intelligence did its best to exploit his latent insecurities and egged him on via agent provocateurs to clash head on with the Japanese. The racist attitude of the British officials and their recent abandonment of their Indian soldiers however, had put off many officers and men and they were amenable to persuasion. Mohan Singh however, did raise the first INA and that is a tremendous plus to his credit. He showed surprising qualities of leadership and some had even begun to call him the "*Eleventh Guru*". This itself is a great tribute. Mohan Singh, the British said, lost patience in some cases and possibly used coercion and strong arm methods as per subsequent British claims. Most of this was pure propaganda designed to demonise the INA hierarchy and cook up cases against them after the war. It was also to justify to themselves that they had lost the faith of the Indian sepoy only due to coercion and trickery. They refused to face upto the fact that it was their disgraceful let down of their men in Malaya and their racial arrogance which had put off the Indian Officers and men. However, such rumours and reports of coercion did put off some Indian POWs who had qualms about violating their oath of allegiance to the British Army. Also, all of them had faced the shock of defeat and most of them now just simply wanted to survive and get back home. Many of them were not willing to engage in combat again in such ambiguous and uncertain circumstances. *It was the instinct of self-preservation and not so much lofty questions of loyalty to an oath to the British that led some of them to decline undertaking further combat. Cowardice can always masquerade as principle after the event.* Their initial experience of Japanese captivity had till then been relatively benign and some thought it would be safer to be POWs and survive, rather than get

pitch-forked into more uncertain battles with unfamiliar leaders and new and untested organisations.

Family Allotments

Another very major consideration that caused Indian soldiers to hesitate about joining the INA was that all of them were concerned that if they joined the INA, the British would stop the family allotment, the pay that was being remitted every month, to their families back home. Stoppage of the family allotment was one of the biggest cause for hesitation. Perhaps Mohan Singh was also painfully aware of his own inadequacies. It was for these reasons that in December 1942 Gen. Mohan Singh himself asked the Japanese to bring Bose to Malaya as early as possible to assume charge of the fledgling INA. In March 1942, Mohan Singh went to Tokyo and a conference of the IIL was chaired by Rash Bihari Bose. The Indian Independence League (IIL) was now provisionally established throughout Japanese held Asia. An agenda was prepared for a fully representative conference of Indians to be held in Bangkok in June 1942.

At the instance of Fujiwara, the Japanese now sought a Tri-partite Axis Declaration on Indian Independence and invited Subhash Bose to leave Germany and come to the Far East to assume the leadership position of the INA. As we have seen, at that stage, Bose's energies in Europe were entirely being consumed towards getting a Tri-partite Declaration favouring Indian independence, for which he was campaigning vigorously in Germany. Italy was willing while Germany remained hesitant. Finally, on May29, 1942, Bose had his meeting with Hitler and received a final refusal to support Indian independence just then. Only after this set- back did he firmly set his eyes on the East.

The Indians meanwhile assembled in Bangkok on June 15, 1942 for a wider conference and enthusiastically heard the message Bose had sent from Berlin. They then unanimously invited him to come to the East and assume leadership as early as he could. In a radio-telephone conversation with Rash Bihari Bose, Netaji accepted their invitation. Had he been able to come without delay, perhaps history would have charted a radically different course. Unfortunately, as it was, the Germans took over 13 months to agree to let him move. Then they sent him via submarine in a perilous voyage that took another three months.

Meanwhile, the fledgling INA had encountered other Japanese officers in the field, some of whom were arrogant and contemptuous. Suspicion of Japanese assurances regarding freedom from interference began to be increasingly voiced in the IIL and INA. Most Indians did not want to be accused of acting as agents of another foreign power, intent upon enslaving India. They wanted to be guided by the principles espoused by the Indian National Congress. Beyond that they would only go once Bose came and assumed charge.

Hence the Conference sought Japanese agreement on so many particular aspects. A Council of Action of the IIL was formed. This was the Executive Committee of five under the leadership of Rash Bihari Bose (as President). They sought specific acceptance of five points by the Japanese:-

- Control by the League and INA of all Indian POWs
- The INA must have status as an Army freely allied with Japan
- Unfettered control of INA by the League
- The absolute Independence of India after liberation
- League control of property in East Asia of Indians who had left as refugees.

Meanwhile, in August 1942, great political unrest had broken out in India due to the launch of the Quit India Movement by Mahatma Gandhi and its brutal repression by the British. The Main League Secretariat was set up in Bangkok and Territorial Branch HQs were established throughout Japanese held territory in Asia. Members of the Council of Action took charge of their departments. Propaganda via radio broadcasts was now intensified under central directions and agents were recruited for espionage and subversion in India.

The Eleventh Guru

Meanwhile Gen. Mohan Singh had gradually gained confidence and stature. He told the conference that about 25,000 Indian volunteers had joined the INA. He was keen to expand the force. He returned to Singapore with the impressive rank badges of General and the support of IIL, and intensified the recruitment drive. He was now asking for a personal oath of loyalty to

himself. *By August 1942 about 40,000 POWs had signed a pledge to join the INA under Mohan Singh*. The INA offered personal liberty, comparative comfort and freedom from the labour gangs of the Pacific islands where several thousand Indian POWs had already gone.

The Indian Camp Commanders of the POW camps also turned ambitious. They wanted to improve their personal standing with Gen. Mohan Singh by presenting long list of volunteers. Some were later accused of using even harsher methods of persuasion. However, a lot of this was primarily British propaganda designed to defame the INA and explain away, why so many Indian soldiers had joined the INA. What right did a racist, exploitative colonial regime have to the loyalty of its oppressed subjects? The nation is the highest value for a soldier and the so called oath to a Foreign Queen could and should have been broken in such a freedom struggle. To think otherwise, was to lend unabashed legitimacy to foreign colonial rule and exploitation and oppose the very idea of India as a nation state. Yet this is precisely what was done after the war, when the British led Indian Dominion treated the INA soldiers as traitors.

In August 1942, the Japanese agreed to the raising of the first Combat Division of the INA. By September 10, an armed force of 16,300 officers and men was ready. Gen. Mohan Sigh now asked for a second combat division to be raised from his force of 24,000 men (former POWs). He also wanted to recruit civilians and train them in training centres established for this purpose. He told Col. Iwaguro, his Japanese Army liaison officer that he wanted to raise an Army of about 2,50,000 men. Mohan Singh had now acquitted quite a reputation. Some people had even begun to hail him as the Eleventh Guru. The Japanese were however hesitant. They had huge labour requirements for an airfield construction programme in Malaya. The strength of Japanese forces here had been run down. The INA, at current strength, was quite enough for the depleted Japanese Garrison to handle in an emergency. It could not be allowed to expand until a part of it had moved to Burma. So the recruitment of civilians had to be delayed and the move out of the First INA Division to Burma expedited.

Trouble in the INA

The Japanese hesitation in expanding the INA led to increasing friction with Mohan Singh's INA. Although its First Division had been warned for move to Burma, there was no official Japanese acknowledgement of its status as an

Allied Army. There were also instances of Japanese interference with Indian propaganda broadcasts in Singapore under K.P.K. Menon. In November 1942, Mohan Singh received a report on the handling of Indian property in Rangoon. Since the Bangkok resolution had asked that the property of absent Indians be entrusted to the League as a source of revenue, this led to increased acrimony and friction and the Japanese at one stage declared that the Bangkok Resolution had never been accepted and the Council of Action had no legal status. It was all at the discretion of the local Japanese commanders. Agent provocateurs served to egg on the Indian functionaries in the INA and IIL (especially the latter) and questioned their patriotism and accused them of selling out to the Japanese, whom they painted as a new colonising power. This aroused deep, latent insecurities in the First INA's leadership

Agent Provocateurs, The Gill Episode

All this led to considerable disquiet and unrest in the INA and IIL. The simple fact is that Gen. Mohan Singh and most Indian leaders of the IIL lacked political stature and widespread legitimacy and were therefore making exaggerated demands on the Japanese for assurances. They had little direct access to the Japanese political leadership and Imperial General HQ in Tokyo. They were left to deal with middle level Japanese officers in the field and local minions. The Japanese military officers at the formation levels felt they had beaten them in combat and were not too inclined to be hectored and pilloried about their intentions. Mohan Singh was seen as intransigent by the local Japanese commanders and he did not have much stature or standing in their eyes. Then there was an incident which besmirched the reputation of Man Mohan Singh in the eyes of the local Japanese command. Lt. Col. Gill had led an Intelligence team to Burma. Unfortunately the team leader Capt. M.S. Dhillon however, commandeered an elephant and escaped with his whole team to India. The Japanese faith in the INA was badly shaken. Col. Gill came under immense cloud. When Mohan Singh tried to defend his co-religionist, the Japanese were thoroughly incensed. There are also clear indications that British Military Intelligence had been able to penetrate the INA and had instigated this near rebellion to delay/put off any Japanese offensive into India in autumn of 1942 that would coincide with the Quit India Movement. In this they seem to have succeeded entirely.

Mohan Singh now rashly resolved to prevent any major INA movement into Burma till Japan had given satisfactory assurances. If Japan refused, he threatened to disband the INA. The council of Action of the IIL backed Mohan Singh in his intransigence. They demanded an official reply to the Bangkok Resolution and recognition that the Council of Action was the supreme executive of the Indian movement. *They specifically sought guarantee of Indian sovereignty after liberation, a public recognition of the INA and facilities for its expansion.*

The Japanese were incensed. They were flummoxed by the Indian penchant for legal hair-splitting. On December 01, 1942, Col. Iwaguro, Head of the Liaison organisation, tersely said that Japan recognised no obligation regarding the Bangkok Resolutions. The Japanese Government was not prepared to make any further statements at this stage. All Indian soldiers would revert forthwith to Japanese control, less the First INA Division. Expansion of the INA would be decided upon later by the Japanese. Mohan Singh was asked that the first draft of soldiers was required for Burma on December 05, 1942. He refused point blank to provide it. This created a crisis. The Japanese tried to diffuse it. Fujiwara was called down from his new staff assignment to intercede with his old friend.

Mohan Singh was quite reckless now. He threatened that if the Japanese tried to replace the British in India, the Indians would fight them. He did not want the bogus independence that had been given to Manchuria. He further said that the Japanese were crushing the Malays here and completely Japanising them in a manner that created suspicion. With this, no basis for cooperation was left. Rash Bihari Bose wavered but some of his colleagues looked upon him with suspicion due to his Japanese citizenship. On December 08, 1942, all members of the Council of Action, except Rash Bihari Bose, resigned.

Fire Fighting by Rash Behari

Rash Bihari now tried to strengthen his position by wresting control of the INA from Mohan Singh. When this proved impossible, on December 29, 1942, Mohan Singh was summoned to Iwaguro's office, dismissed from his command and arrested. The INA now received Mohan Singh's order of dissolution soon after his arrest. Mohan Singh was first incarcerated in a remote part of the Singapore Island, then on a small island in the Jehore Strait and finally in Sumatra till the war ended. Surprisingly, he was not tried

by the British after the war because he had apparently dissolved the INA at a critical period when the British were most vulnerable in 1942-43.

For six weeks, Rash Bihari Bose tried to salvage the INA. However, many people were resentful of the way Mohan Singh had asked for a pledge of loyalty to himself personally. Questions arose whether he was entitled to dissolve the INA and return them to POW status? His actions did have a tinge of megalomania and were perhaps prompted by the prodding of British agent provocateurs, keen to delay and disrupt the march to India via Burma. Col. Iwaguro addressed the INA officers and undertook to obtain the Japanese Government's Statement of Policy. The talk now turned to not whether the INA should continue, but on what terms? In February 1943, leading officers were told that Netaji Subhash Bose was on his way from Germany. This by itself had a dramatic impact and highlights the power of personality and the reputations of senior commanders in combat. This really calmed the highly inflamed situation. The news of the arrival of Bose had a dramatic impact on rapidly plummeting morale of the INA.

After February 13, 1943, the INA was progressively reorganized and revived. About 30 officers and 4,000 men were weeded out. There was further dissonance with the League. However the Japanese gave threats now of physical violence and the League resistance collapsed. Rash Bihari assumed charge and moved his HQ from Bangkok to Singapore. On April 03, 1943, he assumed dictatorial powers in the now representative conference at Singapore in the end of April and put forth the new constitution. The Bangkok Resolutions were scrapped. Lt. Col. J.K. Bhonsle, a relatively senior Officer was now given temporary command of the INA. Since seniority had been restored, it did serve to smoothen many ruffled feathers and upheld a deeply ingrained military principle of seniority of service and experience. It was now clear that Netaji Subhash Bose would have a freehand. His friend Col. Yamamoto, the former Military Attache in Berlin had been appointed to succeed Col. Iwaguro. He would have full authority over the League and the INA would be subordinated to the IIL.

In May 1943, Rash Bihari left Singapore to await the arrival of Netaji in Tokyo. No one quite knew how he would come, but his arrival in East Asia was awaited almost as the coming of the Messiah. The very news of his arrival had electrified the INA and calmed the turbulent waters. He alone had the stature and charisma to lead the INA with aplomb and confidence. He had no need to certify his patriotic credentials to anyone and no latent

insecurities about his position, which could impel him to act in haste or immaturity. He did not interact with minions and low level functionaries in the field but directly at the highest political and military leadership levels. He had done this in Nazi Germany and he would do so in Japan. This top-down approach served to greatly enhance his own prestige and standing with the rank and file and burnished the image of the INA as a competent allied force and not a pool of POW labour to be exploited. Bose was the promised one, the chosen one destined to lead the March for India's Freedom. Bose was an established leader of the Indian National Congress. He had twice been its President. He had been treated like an acknowledged national leader by the Italians and Germans and treated with great respect and deference in all countries of Europe that he had visited.

The First INA was now history. Its sad demise had perhaps caused a fatal delay in the Japanese plans to invade British India in 1942-43. Possibly, the British had infiltrated the First INA and instigated this rebellion, specifically to stall the impending invasion at a most dangerous time. The what ifs of history remain to haunt us forever. What if the Germans had not delayed Bose's move East by 16 crucial months? What if Netaji had been available in Bangkok in summer or autumn of 1942? Would India have been set free by military force? Would the congruence of an internal revolt/civil disobedience movement with an armed external invasion, have spelt the death knell of the British Empire in India? In 1942-43, the Japanese Air Force and Naval Aviation were still a formidable force and would have facilitated a rapid blitzkrieg into North East India. If they had seized the railheads of Tinsukhia and Dimapur, it may well have been all over for British Rule in India. 1942 had seen a mass famine in Bengal, where three million Indians had perished because the panic-stricken British had destroyed all local riverine crafts to stop an anticipated invasion of Bengal via Chittagong. The British troops were imbalanced and poised towards the wrong theatre in united Bengal. An invasion via the North East would have encountered very little resistance and actually reached the railheads for the plains. That unfortunately was not to be and the First INA's revolt played its role in staving off this Japanese offensive in 1942-43.

5

Bose Moves East

"In battle the safest place for the Samurai is under the sharp edge of the enemies sword."

— Kendo, The Japanese Art of Swordsmanship

"I haven't come all this way just to go back."

Bose to Captain of German submarine who advised him to avoid transfer to the Japanese submarine in a raging sea-storm
April 26, 1943

In 1941-42, the Japanese had been flooded by Indian requests to get Bose from Berlin. All Indian interlocutors emphasised the vital need for his presence to energize the INA and assume leadership of the armed Indian Freedom Struggle. He was the only Indian leader they felt with the unimpeachable credibility and the tremendous charisma that could inspire the soldiers of the INA and the Indian diaspora in South East Asia, to an all out effort to liberate India from the foreign yoke. The first requests had come from Pritam Singh of Indian Independence League (IIL) in October 1941 itself. The requests were repeated by Gen. Mohan Singh, who formed the First INA. This request was reiterated in the IIL Conferences in Tokyo in March 1942 and then Bangkok in June 1942. This universal, glowing estimate of Bose by the Indians of his generation, speaks volumes about the man himself and his national and international standing and stature in the

troubled years of the Second World War. Not only did the Indians acknowledge his tremendous leadership qualities but the Leaders of war time Italy and above all of Nazi Germany had been deeply impressed by the forceful and dynamic personality of Subhash Chandra Bose. That is why, the arrogant Nazis had invested so heavily in Bose. No less a leader than Adolf Hitler himself had been deeply struck by Bose's magnetic persona and deep commitment. The German Foreign Minister Ribbentrop had indeed been greatly impressed with him and had helped raise and fund the Free India Centre in Berlin and the brigade sized Indische Legion. He had gone out of his way to arrange his meeting with Adolf Hitler. No other leader of a subject nation had ever managed such deference and even a face to face interaction with the Fuehrer himself, when the German warlord was at the peak of his power and wartime prestige.

Meanwhile in Japan itself, Prime Minister Tojo had spoken about the need for military activities in India at the Imperial Conference on April 04, 1942. On April 17, a coordination meeting was held between the Japanese Army, the Navy and the Foreign Affairs Ministry (the Gaimusho)and it was agreed that they would invite Bose to come to Tokyo. Accordingly the Japanese Foreign Ministry had sent a signal to its embassy in Berlin to seek the transfer of Bose. The Japanese Ambassador Gen. Oshima had in fact conveyed this request to the Germans as far back as April 29, 1942. Why then did it take 13 long months before the Germans decided to send Bose to the East? Once the decision was finally taken, why was he sent by the most hazardous sea route in a German submarine voyage , that in itself took three more months. Not just that, this perilous undersea voyage entailed a transfer from a German to a Japanese submarine on the high seas. Consequent to this inexcusable delay, a glorious and historic window of opportunity that had opened in 1942-43, to free India by military force, was closed forever. By the time Bose did reach Japan– it was a case of too little too late. The air and naval power situation in the Pacific-Indian Ocean region had tilted decisively against Japan. Air power and naval domination by Aircraft carrier based naval aviation, had been the key to the brilliant early successes of the Japanese Army in Malaya, Singapore and Burma. Sans air superiority, the Indian operation was foredoomed to failure. What was worse was that lack of naval domination had closed the option of attack on India from the sea flank. Bose and the INA had been pressing for this option as it would get them onto the Indian mainland at the earliest (They wanted to attack via

Chittagong into what is now Bangladesh). The very difficult land route from Burma to the Indian North East was a logistical nightmare. What made it worse was that the Japanese could not take their heavy artillery along this most treacherous supply route. When it came to the pitched battles of Imphal and Kohima, this lack of artillery support was a fatal disadvantage. The fact is that despite knowing that the odds were stacked so hopelessly against him and the INA, Bose still took the plunge, confident that the very news of an army of Indians attacking India to liberate it from the British yolk, would cause the people of India to rise in revolt. The example set would inspire the rank and file of the British Indian armed forces to open rebellion. The centre of gravity of any offensive directed against British India was not so much the capture of Indian territory but turning the loyalty of about 2.5 million Indian soldiers to their British masters. Destroying this loyalty to foreign rulers was the prime objective of Bose. Hence regardless of success or failure of the military operations in the field, Bose was duty bound to go ahead anyway. In this assessment of the wider political impact of an INA invasion, Bose was to prove absolutely accurate and prophetic.

The Submarine Extraction

Was the delay of Bose's move east deliberate or just incidental? Personally I am inclined to think that it was not deliberate. The primary theatre of operations for the Germans was the Soviet Union where a life and death battle was being fought between two ruthless and totalitarian states. It may be pertinent to remember, that out of a total of some 480 German divisions, about 360 had entered Russia and never came out. They were annihilated. The Soviets suffered a staggering 25 million casualties in that war. The Germans suffered some 7 million casualties. The Americans, French, British and other Allies put together however suffered only about 1.1 million casualties. So that gives us a very clear indication of where the actual, bitter fighting had taken place in the Second World War. In fact it is speculated that the Allies deliberately delayed the landings in Normandy, to ensure that the two totalitarian states would mutually destroy one another. It was only when the Red Army began to relentlessly roll back the German Whermacht from the very gates of Moscow to the gates of Berlin that the US got alarmed and decided to intervene to ensure that the whole of Europe was not conquered by the Red Army. As such, Hitler's primary area of focus and monumental obsession was the Soviet Union. That was where he was

fighting his life and death struggle. North Africa and India for him were plain sideshows and engaged his attention only episodically. That too was mostly under Italian or Japanese prodding and diplomatic pressure.

The Air Option

The Japanese had begun to press for the transfer of Bose from end April 1942 onwards. The first option considered was a trans- continental air journey across Europe and Russia to Japanese held Manchuria. It is noteworthy that the First non stop flight from Europe to the Far East was carried out on July 02,1942 by the Italians. However Bose was not on that flight. It turned out that Hitler himself had ruled out this option. The Italians, he felt, just could not keep a secret. Hence it would be most dangerous for Bose to fly across Russia. Bose, Hitler felt, was simply too important an asset to be risked in this cavalier fashion. This serves to highlight the significant impact that Bose had made on the Nazi warlord. Hitler's instinct had been absolutely correct. It is now known that via the use of Ultra code breaking machine, the British had been able to intercept the Japanese communications to their Embassy in Berlin. As such, they knew of Bose's plans to move east. Earlier, to keep their Ultra machine secret, they had permitted Bose to escape to Afghanistan and beyond. Not this time. They were truly alarmed by what this inveterate enemy had been able to achieve so far and after their devastating setbacks in Malaya, Singapore and Burma, they were fully cognizant of the havoc he could wreak in South Asia in the days to come. Churchill had already ordered the SOE to assassinate him as he attempted his escape to Germany. They had thought he would escape via Iran, Iraq and Turkey to Germany and assassination squads had been deployed accordingly. Bose had outwitted them by escaping via the Soviet Union. This time the British Foreign Minister, Anthony Eden, personally asked the British Ambassador in Moscow to approach the Russian Foreign minister Molotov himself, with the news of Bose's likely move by land or air route through the USSR. In no case was he to be permitted to go through. It s not known what assurances the Soviets gave but Bose was prudently not sent via Russia. It was just as well, for the British may even have attempted to shoot down that plane or get the Russians to force it to land or simply destroy it. In fact, the Double Cross Committee of the British MI-5 had advised Britain to do all it could to keep Bose in Germany and bar his return to any area geographically closer to British

India. In October 1942, Bose was himself keen to take a trans-continental flight of the Italians and in fact, it is said that in November that year he actually travelled to Italy to catch that trans-continental flight. It would have been the fastest means to get to the Far East. A British tabloid news paper had meanwhile put out a report that Bose was likely to come to the Far East via a trans-continental flight. This leak finally killed the proposal. Hitler now gave orders that the Indian leader was far too important a person for his life to be risked in this manner and that finally ruled out the air route option altogether.

The Under-Sea Option

A desperate Bose had then sought a second meeting with Ribbentrop. He met him in November 1942 and the submarine option was discussed in detail. The initial plan was for Bose to move to the French coast (then under German occupation) from where either a Japanese or German submarine would take him all the way to Japan. It was a monumental voyage and would tax the endurance and technical capacity of all the diesel-electric submarines of that era and their crews. Besides most of the sea lanes and coasts were heavily mined and such a long submarine voyage was definitely a most hazardous undertaking at that point in time. As such, both the German and Japanese Navies refused to risk their submarines for the whole voyage. The seas were heavily mined and patrolled by allied aircraft's and warships during the war and it was a very hazardous and high-risk venture. The Japanese Navy initially objected that their rules did not permit them to take civilians on board! They were informed that the person concerned was the Supreme Commander of the Liberation Army of India. Plans were reworked and finally a compromise solution was reached. A German U-80 submarine (U-Boat in German parlance) would take Bose from Europe all the way to the coast of Madgascar. There it would rendezvous with a Japanese I-21 Submarine and a mid sea transfer of passengers would be carried out. This was the first submarine to submarine transfer of personnel in that war and perhaps remains an unprecedented operation so far. The Japanese submarine would then take him to the coast of Sumatra. It was a highly dangerous and risky plan and would have taxed the courage and endurance of any veteran submariner. One cannot see any senior Indian politician today, exposing himself to such a high-risk mission. But Bose was not an everyday Indian politician. He was a Samurai who, whenever he was given a choice between

life and death, would unhesitatingly chose death for the larger cause he was so passionately committed to. More than any other episode in his high-octane life, this submarine voyage marked him out as a classical Samurai. The German and Japanese submarine crews each did half the voyage, it was Bose and his secretary alone who had to endure the whole journey. It can be claustrophobic and back- breaking. You don't see the sun for days on end and are cramped up inside a packed submarine. However, Bose was by now desperate to get out of Germany and reach the Far East where the action for the freedom of India was now entirely focused. Bose did so just in time- for within a matter of months, the tide of war turned in Europe and the large German Army in Stalingrad (the 6th Army)surrendered. With this died out any last vestige of hope of the German Army ever being able to invade India from the direction of Central Asia. The North African option had been foreclosed around this same time. Bose had nothing more to do in Germany. His battlefield lay ahead of him in Burma and Eastern India and he was desperate to get to his chosen action field of battle by any means possible, even in a highly cramped submarine. A grand new adventure was about to begin. This was a life far stranger than fiction.

The Marathon Submarine Voyage

Netaji moved by train to Kiel. He was accompanied by his Secretary Abid Hasan Safrani, who was one of the leaders of the Irregular warfare companies of the Indesche legion. The Plans were kept Top Secret and even Hasan had no clue as to where they were headed. Bose met Emile Schenkel for the last time. On February 08, 1943, Bose and Hasan went down into the highly cramped but brand new submarine U-180 and were welcomed on board by Capt. Werner Musemberg. Kingshuk Nag writes-anyone who has been in a submarine knows how cramped and claustrophobic it can be in such a vessel. There is hardly any room to move around and the lack of natural light for prolonged periods can affect the psyche of the toughest of men. That is why submariners get a well deserved hazard allowance. The U-Boat slunk past the coast of Norway and slipped into the Atlantic Ocean. Bose put his confinement to good use. He busied himself, dictating drafts of future speeches and presentations to be made to the Japanese leaders to clarify his mind and prepare himself thoroughly for the forthcoming task. Bose was thorough and meticulous in all he did. It was a tough life. The

submarine stank of diesel and the sweat of the many sailors cramped within. There was no proper food– especially the Indian food that they craved for. They had a very close call. The Submarine had surfaced to breathe and recharge batteries when a British Tanker, the Corbis, almost collided with the Submarine . The submarine jerked and for a while there was complete panic. But Bose remained unruffled throughout this episode and kept on dictating to Hasan. At one point he even chided him for getting distracted and not paying full attention to what he was saying. The German submarine could not take the chance and dived and fired torpedoes to sink the British Tanker. The voyage then went on undisturbed.

A Samurai's Decision

Throughout the voyage, Bose kept on getting signals to keep him posted about the major events happening in the war. Once again the British had decoded these messages and were aware of Bose's escape via the submarine route. However, once more, to preserve the secrecy of their code breaking machine, they avoided taking action to intercept U-180. Finally the submarine rounded the Cape of Good Hope and entered the Indian Ocean. It now set sail for off the island of Madagascar. On April 26, 1943, after a two and a half months undersea voyage, they sighted the Japanese I-21 Submarine off the coast of Madagascar. Unfortunately it was sea state five. There was such a massive sea storm that the two submarines could not risk coming close together for risk of an inadvertent collision due to being thrown together by the huge waves. As such, for close to two days they kept sailing parallel to each other but could not risk closing to effect a transfer of passengers. It was getting highly risky to stay on the surface for so long. They could easily have been picked up by enemy aircraft. They were also running low on fuel. Finally the two captains spoke and brought their submarines as close as they could. Keeping the sea state in mind, this was still a kilometre apart. They could get no closer. To get to the Japanese submarine Bose had only a flimsy rubber dinghy and a rope for safety. Bose, Hasan and the Captain came on deck and looked at the raging sea.

"Can't you get any closer?"Bose asked.

"Am afraid not sir, we could collide." The German captain said. They all looked at the raging sea and the 20 foot high waves.

"What do you suggest?" Bose asked uncertainly.

"I recommend that you go back" the German captain said flatly.

Bose looked at the sea in a raging storm. Then he turned to the captain and said quietly.

"Captain, I haven't come all this way just to go back!" It was a Samurai speaking once more and he had chosen death over life and the comfort zone. Capt. Musemberg saluted. Bose and Hasan got into the rubber dinghy and paddled for all they were worth. Even as Musemberg watched in horror, they were swallowed up many times by the gigantic waves. Finally, after what seemed an eternity they reached the Japanese submarine I-21. They were soaked to the skin. They were welcomed on board by Captain Masao Teroka and Lieutenant Commander Izu Juichi. The Japanese submarine was far larger and roomier. It was the Emperor's birthday and they had a celebration on board. They then set sail for Sabang, a group of islands off the coast of Sumatra. They finally reached there on May 08, 1943. Bose's epic Odyssey had taken him full three months. As submariners go, it had been a rigorous test of endurance and faith. Bose had at last arrived in his chosen field of action.

At Sabang, Bose was received by Col. Yamamoto Bin, President of the Hikari Kikan, the group set up by the Japanese to liaise with the INA. Yamamoto had been the military attaché in Berlin and hence knew Bose very well. Bose and Yamamoto then flew to Tokyo, touching down enroute at Penang, Manila, Saigon and Taiwan. The two landed in Tokyo on May16, 1943. So far Bose was travelling incognito as Matsuda.

The Submarine Voyage(08 February - 08 May 1943)

Submarine Voyage - Japanese Leg

Bose Moves East

6

The Second INA and the Provisional Government of Free India

"If India abandons her traditions and history and forgets her mission under the spell of Britain's power and propaganda and continues to follow her, then I shall feel sorry for the Indian people for wasting this God sent opportunity."

–Hideki Tojo
Prime Minister of Japan

Two days later on June 12,1943 Tokyo Radio announced the presence of Netaji in Japan. Bose subsequently held a press conference in Tokyo on June 19, 1943 and detailed his plans for the freedom of his country. He stridently called for the Quit India Movement back home to now be escalated to an armed struggle. "Only when the Indian people have received their baptism by fire on a large scale, will they be qualified to achieve freedom" he announced in ringing tones that reverberated around the world. The news of Netaji's arrival in Japan, electrified the large Indian diaspora in Singapore and other South East Asian countries. Soon Bose was addressing them on radio. On June 27, 1943, Bose left Tokyo and arrived in Singapore to a tumultuous welcome. He was accompanied by Rash Behari Bose. Singapore was destined to be Netaji's HQ for the better part of the next two years. A week later, on July 04, 1943, Rash Behari Bose publicly handed over the mantle of leadership to Netaji saying, "I have brought you one of the most

outstanding personalities of our motherland."Netaji now announced that he would be setting up a Provisional Government of Free India, whose task would be to prepare the Indian people for an armed struggle and subsequently enable them to govern themselves. "We have a grim fight ahead of us" he warned his countrymen. Those were heady days indeed. Netaji's stirring speeches charged up the people of the Indian diaspora and raised their morale sky- high. Just the arrival of one man had wrought such a transformation in a matter of days. It only served to highlight the power of personality in war.

Hakumate Arzi Azad Hind

The Provisional govt of Free India was officially named Hakumate Arzi Azad Hind. It's official language was chosen to be Hindustani. To give greater legitimacy to the struggle for freedom, the Azad Hind government prepared its own civil code and released its own stamps. Later an Azad Hind bank was formed in Singapore and the Free Government began to print its own currency. Its salutation was Jai Hind and its national anthem was the simplified version of Tagore's *Jana Gana Mana*. This had already been rendered into a stirring military band tune by Bose, when he had raised the Indesche Legion. On July 05, 1943, Netaji renamed the Indian National Army (INA) as Azad Hind Fauj and reviewed its march past at a mammoth parade in which Gen. Tojo, the Japanese Prime Minister had been invited as the Guest of Honour. The 15,000 strong Force of the INA was then led by its Military Chief, Maj. Gen. Kiani in a most impressive parade in Singapore on the Padang square. In his address, Bose gave his soldiers a stirring slogan," *Dilli chalo*- On to Delhi (or March to Delhi)". This was to be the ringing war cry of the armed freedom struggle. The historic and iconic Red Fort was declared as the final objective of the Indian freedom struggle. At the end of July that year, Netaji undertook a whirlwind tour of East and South-East Asian countries, to enlist moral and material support from the resident Indian communities for the Freedom struggle. Netaji went to Rangoon, Bangkok, Penang and Saigon. Wherever he went, he received a rousing reception from the local Indian population and was greeted by tumultuous crowds. Fired by his impassioned rhetoric

("*Tum mujhe khoon domain tumhe azadi dunga*"-you give me blood and I'll give you freedom) he received liberal donations in cash, gold and jewellery. Bose collected about two million Pounds to raise his army and run

his provisional government in exile to start with. Self reliance in terms of resources to raise the Liberation Army, was the main lesson he had learnt in Germany while forming the Indian Legion. He was later to go back many times to the Indian Community in South East Asia to contribute liberally for the raising of his Provisional Government and the INA. Initially the First INA had been entirely funded by the Japanese as a loan that was to be paid back after independence. However, later it was almost entirely funded by the IIL through the Azad Hind Bank that Bose had formed and filled its coffers with the generous donations from the Indian diaspora.

The Provisional Government

On October 21, 1943, Netaji officially announced the establishment of his provisional government in exile. Netaji was the Head of State and the Supreme Commander of the INA. He also held the post of the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the War Minister. The Provisional Government had five Ministers, Annand Sahay, who looked after Foreign Affairs as the junior minister, S.A. Aiyer (a Reuters correspondent in Kaula Lampur) was appointed Minister for Publicity and Propaganda, Lakshmi Sahgal looked after Women's Organisation and Lt. Col. (later Maj. Gen.) A. C. Chatterji became the Finance Minister. Having formed the Provisional Government in exile, Bose now put his soldiers on a firm legal footing by officially declaring war against Britain and America. There was considerable discussion whether war should be declared against America but Bose was adamant. His primary supporter, Japan was at war with America and if he wanted their support, a declaration of war against the USA was axiomatic. The Azad Hind Government was granted recognition by nine countries- Japan, Germany, Italy, (the Axis Powers) Burma, Croatia, the Philippines, Thailand, the Chinese government of Wang Ching Wei and the Manchuko state. Subsequently during the INA trials, this legal cover was to act as a shield for his gallant officers and men who were put on trial. They were soldiers of an officially constituted state in exile that was recognised by nine countries of the world and had duly declared war against Great Britain. They were only doing their patriotic duty towards their country. Duty to their country, quite naturally superseded their oath to the King Emperor of a colonial and exploitative occupying power.

The Azad Hind Fauj

Bose had initially planned to expand the INA to a size of 50,000 men. This was to be done by enrolling about 25,000 Indian POWs in Japanese captivity and also doing fresh recruitment from the Indian diaspora in South East Asia. There are also reports that ultimately Bose dreamed of a mammoth INA of some 3 million men. In the context of heavy reliance on vast masses of motivated manpower- he was so much like Mao (who had ultimately expanded the PLA to a record size of about 4.2 million men). However, by 1943, the Japanese were getting hard pressed in the Pacific theatre and the Japanese war-time economy was definitely showing signs of strain. They initially agreed to arm and equip a force of just 30,000 men. After the dissolution of the First INA, its General Head Quarters (GHQ) was replaced by two distinct organs, namely,

- **Military Bureau.** One was the Military Bureau with Col. J K Bhonsle (later Maj. Gen.) as its Director. This was a policy formulation set up something like a War Department functioning directly under the IIL. Bhonsle had his own staff. In many ways therefore it functioned somewhat like a Central Military Commission of Communist Armies.
- **Army Command.** The other organ was the Army Command with Lt. Col. (later Maj. Gen.) M. Z. Kiani as its commander. Bose had earlier gained invaluable experience in raising the Indesche Legion in Germany and had a good idea of the German training and motivational methodologies. The bulk of his recruits were Indian POWs in Japanese prisoner camps.

It was not easy to create INA out of the defeated British Indian Army. The INA had its roots in the British Indian Army that had been moulded over a period of nearly 200 years, first by the East India Company and then by the British Monarch's representatives entirely to serve British imperial objectives. Sitanshu Kar write. The Army Britain had raised in India had been internally divided to ensure that there would never be another 1857 like revolt in the military. The British rulers had carefully studied the existing faultlines in Indian society. They had ensured that the internally divided British Indian Army would be held together by primarily two factors:-

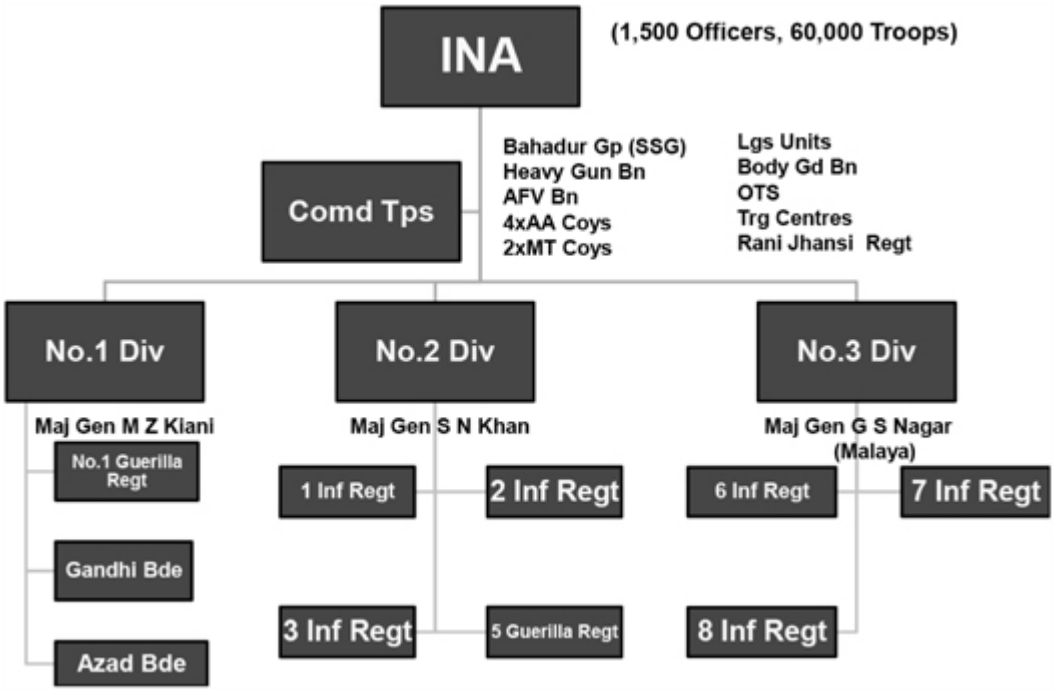
- First, by the *men's hereditary pride in their vocation of soldiering*. In most cases this was pegged on to the pride or *izzat* of the particular ethnicity/ community on which that regiment was based and had its unique set of traditions, customs and practices. Thus the Sikhs, Dogras, Kumaonis, Garhwalis, Rajputs, Jats, Ahirs, Punjabi-Muslims and Gurkhas etc., became the organisational basis for the establishment of class based fighting regiments of Infantry, Cavalry and Artillery. Over a period of time, each of these units became a corporate entity in its own right, repleat with histories that today stretch to 250 years and more. Each Regiment and unit had its battle honours, Flags, Gudieons, awards of bravery and distinctive uniforms and regimental accoutrements etc to foster and deepen the Regimental and fighting spirit.
- The second factor was a sense of loyalty to the British Crown whose salt they had eaten, the concept of "*Naam, Namak, Nishan*"(Name, Salt, Flag), was the basis of its functional excellence and combat motivation. This was deepened by the oath of loyalty to the King Emperor or Queen and strengthened by the fact that being an officer or a soldier in British India was a matter of great prestige and the *British accorded pride of place to its soldiers by way of land grants (jagirs) and special care and responsiveness from the police and district administration* (All this is now sadly ending). The Army recruitment/catchment areas from where these soldiers came were given priority for development by creation of canals and road and rail infrastructure etc. The British Regimental officers genuinely looked after and were dedicated to their men and went to inordinate lengths to learn the customs and traditions of the ethnic groupings/communities to which their men belonged. They usually spent their first annual leave touring the villages in their recruitment areas. The British junior officers also provided very competent leadership at the tactical level and always led from the front. This initial advantage however, was badly frayed after the disastrous rout at the hands of the Japanese in Malaya, Singapore and Burma in 1942. In fact, in many cases the British officers had callously abandoned their men when the chips were down. This did a lot to dent the carefully cultivated image of racial superiority.

Militant Nationalism as the Motivational Credo

Given the shortage of time that he had to field a fighting force ,the simplest way out for Bose would have been to recreate British style organisational units. But Bose was insistent that he would radically transform the organisational philosophy inherited from the British Indian Army to create mixed or All India all Class units that would seek combat motivation to fight, not from the ethnicity of their regiments, but from a far larger Pan-Indian identity and make that the basis of militant nationalism. Such a pan-Indian Identity did not have to conjured up from the blue. The fact is that it existed in a nascent form and Bose did his best to fan it to levels of incandescence. He had seen how the German and Japanese armies relied upon militant nationalism to fire up their soldiers for combat and how well this motivation worked on the battlefield. Thus, like in the Indesche Legion, he insisted upon raising mixed class or AIAC units for the INA. The men were usually mixed down to company level. In fact each company had a somewhat fixed grouping of classes (eg. Dogras and Sikhs or Jats and Ahirs or Jats, Gujars and Madrasis etc). At the battalion level therefore, this resulted in an all India all class composition. He put to use all the motivational tools he had seen in the Whermacht and the Imperial Japanese Army. This included rhetoric, propaganda, rallies, military music and community singing. The INA Flag was the Indian Tri-colour with the Congress Charkha replaced by a Royal Bengal Tiger in the act of springing on a prey. It was a captivating symbol. Ultimately, (Bose, the official history of the INA claims), was able to raise a force of some 1500 officers and some 60,000 men organised into three combat divisions. It also claimed that this force suffered a staggering 26,000 casualties during the War. The official history of the INA penned down by Capt. Yadav, unfortunately has its limitations. Less the first volume, all the rest are simply a Roll of honour, which too is unfortunately, incomplete. It is difficult to verify these figures from authentic muster rolls, because almost all the records of the INA were destroyed by them at the time of surrender, (as per standard military practise before a retreat). There are therefore, little authentic written records of the INA *per se* for research. Reliance therefore has to be placed upon individual testimonies, wartime intelligence reports of the British and Americans about the JIFs (Japanese Inspired Forces) as also detailed interrogation reports of the INA personnel. One of the best written and most reliable accounts of the INA is by Maj. Gen. Mohhamad Zaman Kiani,

who was appointed Chief of the General Staff after the arrest of Mohan Singh and was later the Army Commander of the Second INA. Kiani comes across as a very competent and professionally sound officer and has left behind a very highly readable and well written account titled "India's Freedom Struggle and the Great INA". He had won the sword of honour at the Indian Military Academy, as also the gold medal for standing first in academic and military subjects. Most of the initial and post First INA re-organisation of this force had been done by him. Another very good book on the INA is the American author Peter Ward Fay's- "*The Forgotten Army* which gives an excellent and objective account of its combat performance". A third very reliable source is Joyce Chapman Lebra's "*Jungle Alliance: Japan and the Indian National Army*". The official history of the INA written by Capt. Yadav gives the following as the final organisational chart for the INA by the time when the war had ended:

The Structure of INA



Thus the INA had a respectable size of three divisions, (a corps sized formation) besides a basal compliment of support units like an Armoured Fighting Vehicle (AFV) Battalion, A Heavy Gun battalion and four

companies of anti-aircraft guns and two of Motorised Transport (MT) companies. These were available only at the Army level and not at the divisional level (as was available to most of the modern armies of that period). It was thus a lightly equipped infantry force, that would today be categorised as' Light Infantry' (sans heavy integral fire-power). Besides it had logistics support units, a Body Guard battalion, an Officers Training School and Recruit Training Centres. It was therefore a fairly modern and well organised, though not so very well equipped organisation. The paucity of equipment is really not understood, as there were huge stocks of captured British equipment. Possibly the supply of ammunition for these was a constraint. Two of the three combat divisions were led by Muslim officers-Major Generals Shah Nawaz Khan, and M. Z. Kiyani (who was also the Army Commander of the INA). The third was led by Maj. Gen. Nagar and was entrusted with the defence of Malaya. Bose had made officer selection for command clearly on merit and seniority and this carried credibility with the Force as being just and fair and based on professional criterion of past record and demonstrated performance. Thus both Gen. M.Z. Kiani and Col. Shah Nawaz Khan (whom Bose handpicked to command the newly raised elite Subhash Regiment) were sword of Honour winners from the Indian Military Academy. The Military Secretary's (MS) branch of the INA was obviously doing its homework and had put promotions on a scientific instead of a communal or casteist basis. This drastically improved morale and performance.

It was Bose who had insisted upon the formation of INA divisions, based upon his experience of the German Whermacht. Muslim and Sikh officers held some key appointments in this force and all men ate from a common *Langar* or cook house. This was a great improvement over the British Indian Army which still retained its separate cook houses for different castes/communities. One of the novel features of Bose's INA was an all women battalion called the Rani of Jhansi Regiment. Col. Lakshmi Swaminathan, a doctor, was its first commandant. Like Mao of China, Bose felt that 'women held up half the sky' and he was keen to give them equal footing and even wanted them in combat roles. This was well ahead of his time and the Japanese were most surprised and miffed by this experiment in women empowerment. They were indignant that a lot of energy and resources had to be diverted to protect and secure this unit in fast changing combat environments. They tried very hard to dissuade him, but this

seemed an article of faith with Bose and he was adamant. Thus Gen. Kiani records the following order of battle of the INA at the time when Bose had assumed charge:-

The First Field Force Regiment. This was commanded by Lt. Col. S.M. Hussein. It had three Infantry Battalions, a Vickers Machine Gun Company, a 3 inch Mortar Company, the Heavy Guns Battalion (with nine 4.5" howitzers) and an Armored Fighting Vehicles Battalion with 12 Bren Gun Carriers (all equipped from captured British weapons).

The Second (Gandhi) Guerilla Regiment. This also had three Infantry Battalions commanded by Lt. Col. I.J. Kiani.

The Third (Azad) Guerilla Battalion. Organised as above, this was commanded by Lt. Col. Gulzara Singh.

The Fourth (Nehru) Guerilla Regiment. Organised as above and commanded by Lt. Col. R.M. Arshad.

The Special Services Group. This was organised in small groups to be deployed all along the Indo-Burma border at the outbreak of operations. These parties were to infiltrate behind the enemy lines, disrupt communications, create confusion and subvert Indian personnel of the British Indian Army.

The Intelligence Group. This was commanded by Lt. Col. Shaukat Malik. Their task was the same as the SSG. However they were designed to operate closer to the frontline and not operate as deep as the SSG.

The Reinforcement Group. This was commanded by Lt. Col. Tajjamul Hussein. This formation was to receive all the captured Indian Army Personnel during the fighting, re-educate them and prepare them psychologically to fight along with the INA for the liberation of India. British intelligence reports seem to confirm this organisation and ORBAT.

Change over to Divisional Level Organisations

Gen. Kiani points out that out of the six formations of the INA at that stage, five were commanded by Muslims. It could be asked -was this because he was then the Chief of Staff? (Did INA officers have a sub-conscious bias to rely more on their co-religionists? Mohan Singh had possibly given prominence to the Sikhs and after him the bias towards Muslim officers became somewhat apparent). Another reason for this perhaps, was the desertion of an entire Intelligence Group initially sent to Burma under Lt. Col. Gill. This caused quite a dent in Gen. Mohan Singh's standing with the

Japanese. One Capt. M.S. Dhillon had commandeered an elephant and defected with his entire team. The Japanese were naturally most upset and Col. Gill had personally come under a serious cloud. Col. Gill was supposed to be close to Gen. Mohan Singh and this made the Japanese suspicious of his intentions. This had, for some time, put the poor Sikhs under cloud with the Japanese after this incident. British intelligence reports indicated this infighting amongst the three communities in the first INA. A far greater balance seems to have been restored in these matters, however, once Bose took charge. As stated, Bose had set this right by focusing on merit and demonstrated performance as the primary selection criterion for key posts. Thus two key commanders were Muslim officers who had won the coveted Sword of Honour at the Military academy (Generals Kiani and Shah Nawaz).

Bose assumed charge as the Supreme Commander in August 1943. It was basically a civilian appointment, but from then on, he began wearing the INA uniform, though without any badges of rank. One of Bose's first action on assuming charge was to raise a New Guerilla Regiment called the Subhash Regiment. This had the pick of the personnel of the existing three regiments and was placed under command Lt. Col. Shah Nawaz Khan (later Maj. Gen.) who was a sword of honour winner. Bose now designated the entire existing Army as the First INA Division and set about raising two more such divisions. Thus to Bose goes the credit of reorganising the INA on the standard combat division basis on which all European Armies of that period were organised. The Indian staff had animated discussions with their Japanese counterparts on the Organisation and Staff tables as the Japanese had to provide the equipment. The Japanese officers insisted vehemently, on a very minimal, teeth to tail ratio. They ridiculed the western system of having outsized tail units with 3-4 men supporting each combat soldier on the front. All the weapons and equipment were from captured British stocks. The dry rations- Atta, rice, dal etc were supplied by the Japanese Army free of cost. Fresh rations (vegetables, fruits etc) were procured through the INA supply organisation. Thus the Indians had shown that they could do very well without British officers and given the many constraints they faced, had set up a fairly functional fighting and logistics support organisation.

Gen. Kiani points out that there was no pay in the INA! All ranks however were paid a small amount as pocket money to buy cigarettes, soap and toiletries etc. Thus, he as an Army Commander, was getting just Rs 400

per month! Even sans pay, this INA had fought far better than the British Indian Army had done in Malaya, Singapore and Burma when the air and sea power advantage was heavily tilted against them. Had the INA been an all mercenary force that had joined purely for opportunistic reasons, it would have, as Gen. Kiani points out, so correctly, disintegrated at the first contact with the British Indian Army. On the contrary, despite a terrible line of communication and dismal logistics support and without any air- cover and in fact with air-superiority heavily tilted against them and the Japanese Navy under great pressure on the high seas (which blocked most options of operational maneuver from the sea flank), most of these units performed heroically and kept up with the hard marching Japanese Army.

The eminent American Historian, Peter Ward Fay, writes in his most readable and voluminous history of the INA (The Forgotten Army) that in the operations in Imphal-Kohima the men of the first INA division suffered terribly from disease, especially Malaria, Diarrhea, Amoebic Dysentery, Scrub Typhus, deadly Naga sores that filled with maggots and above all from prolonged and painful starvation due to breakdown in supplies. There were in addition cobras and kraits and scorpions and above all the Hamadrayd or King Cobra that infested these hills. There were the blood sucking leeches and the poisonous flies. There was the near total absence of medical facilities and even simple bandages and stretchers. The enemy had domination of air power and artillery and was well fed and well maintained from the air, even when cut off on the ground. In such terribly adverse circumstances, even the most well established Armies would have crumbled and surrendered in droves. *The simple and honest miracle is that the men of the INA did not*. It was a miracle of motivation and morale. British Military Intelligence Reports of that period honestly admit their astonishment that even in such disastrously adverse circumstances, most men of the INA held well. In fact the British Military Intelligence Report summing up the operations of autumn 1944 noted laconically "*our expectations that large numbers of the INA would desert were not realised*" . It was the same in the Manipur basin. The July 1944 Intelligence Summary, records that *of the original 1600 men of the Gandhi Brigade only 650 were present for duty. But that was not because the rest had surrendered. Upto June 30 only 116 out of 1600, that is just some 7.2 percent had surrendered or been captured. The rest were sick (but they held on doggedly and they did not surrender)*. Similarly in the Azad Brigade, in one battalion, the return strength at the end of June showed that out of a

strength of approximately 600 men hardly more than 300 were available; 250 were sick, 12 had deserted, 3 had committed suicide and 3 were casualties." One reads these grim statistics and is appalled by the sheer scale and intensity of human suffering inflicted, not so much by the enemy but by the hostile elements (a Siachen like scenario at much lower altitude due to the dense and heavily forested terrain). This was doubly compounded by a completely broken down chain of logistics and supplies. Most armies would have mutinied or surrendered in droves in such circumstances. The miracle simply is that the INA did not. The fact that they held on in such grim circumstances speaks volumes of their motivation and morale and can be attributed entirely to the credo of militant nationalism.

Students of military history may kindly note that this Army was not receiving any pay, just pocket money! The hygiene factors of motivation were abysmal. That despite this adverse combat and logistics situation, the INA still put up a stiff fight, and retained its organisational coherence virtually till the bitter end. Is it by itself a remarkable feat and speaks volumes about their intrinsic motivation and morale that had been generated by the technique of militant nationalism. A fighting retreat is one of the most difficult operations to undertake and the INA proved itself in such a retreat across the Chindwin and Irrawaddy rivers in Burma. In Mount Popa, it was to fight exceptionally well. It speaks volumes of the motivational methodology of Militant Nationalism that it had picked up from the German and Japanese Armies. The degree of success achieved in such a short time frame in raising this force, integrating it and fielding it in a highly unfavourable and hostile combat environment, is indeed remarkable. I repeat, *the British and Australian and British Indian Army Divisions had disintegrated far more quickly in such adverse operational conditions with air and naval superiority entirely with the enemy during the fighting in Malaya, Singapore and Burma in 1942.* The Japanese had forced them all into an ignominious rout and surrender in just three months. The combined Japanese–INA Force had launched a blistering attack in 1944 and almost succeeded in Imphal and Kohima. They then had to fight a grim, rear guard action that lasted almost a year and a half till August 1945 when atom bombs and the massive Russian intervention brought the war against Japan to a bitter end. I reiterate, that by the time the composite Japanese-INA force had launched its offensive in 1944, it had completely lost air and naval supremacy. Its lines of communications had become overstretched, whereas

the lines of communication of the British had shortened immensely. Also they now had the support of the gigantic Military–Industrial complex of the USA. Despite this, the miracle is that the INA still put up a fairly credible combat performance, in such an adverse situation. Viewed in isolation from its situational context, some military commentators may categorise the combat performance of the INA as indifferent. I am afraid, they are missing the entire point. The combat performance has to be judged in the light of the highly adverse air and sea power domination the composite Japanese- INA Force was facing and its mind-boggling logistical constraints.

Composite Culture of the INA

The awards of the INA give an inkling of its composite culture where Urdu (Hindustani) was incorporated in a big way as a language of martial expression. Thus it had bravery awards like Shaheed e Bharat, Sher e Hind, Tagma e Shatrunash, Tagma e Bahaduri etc. Its motto was Ittehad, Itmad and Qurbani (Unity, Faith and Sacrifice) which makes it far closer to the Pakistani Army's motto today (less the last factor of Jihad fi Sabilullah added by Gen. Zia ul Haq.)

The Composite Culture of INA

Organisational Ethos

Bose was keen that his INA divisions should fight like regular Japanese Formations and play a leading combat role in the invasion of India. The first soldiers to set foot on Indian soil, he was insistent, must be Indians. The Japanese were hesitant. They had little experience till then, of the combat performance of INA formations and their morale in intense combat situations. They felt that Indian Officers had military experience only at the junior levels of platoons and companies in the British Indian Army. Very few of them had gained experience at the battalion level and almost none had ever held command of higher echelons. As such they wanted to use them for the Guerilla and scouting roles and to carry out intelligence and subversion operations to turn the loyalties of the Indian soldiers opposing them. There was considerable debate and discussion on the roles of the INA and Bose used his influence with the senior Japanese political leadership to have his way. He was insistent that his INA be treated absolutely as an Allied force, equal in all respects to the Japanese Army. The Indian tended to be so prickly on the issue of prestige, that *the Japanese Army was forced to issue a pamphlet/ handbook to their units on how to deal with their Indian comrades who were apparently so touchy and quick to take offence*! Peter Fay writes in

his book, The Forgotten Army, that the Japanese had issued a handbook that made no bones about the trouble that could be expected when dealing with Indians. Its aim was to tell the Japanese soldiers how they should "feel and act" when they encountered the "Indian National Army". It told them not to treat them as a Fifth column, nor a convenient source of coolie labour but men fighting for the freedom of their motherland, fighting a common enemy with a common purpose. In short an allied Army. The handbook cautioned with "Years of deceit, oppression and exploitation at the hands of the British have given them qualities of mind and patterns of behaviour that make them very difficult to handle". It catalogues a list of things that Japanese soldiers should never do. "Never strike an Indian. One blow will destroy years of kindness" also "Do not tell lies. They have extremely good memories. They remember who said what and where and when and having laboured under British lies for so many years are extremely shrewd at discerning them." To all those who have propagated the myth that the Japanese were exploiting the Indians for their own purpose and like to label the INA as stooges of the Japanese, should read this Japanese Army Handbook on how to deal with the INA. It is a revelation and an eye-opener.

The simple fact is that because of the prestige of Bose and his very high standing with the Japanese hierarchy, the INA was treated far better than the Burmese National Army (BNA) for which the Japanese local officers had thinly disguised contempt. In hindsight, they were not wrong. The INA stood by them through thick and thin, whereas the BNA deserted them as soon as the British gained the upper hand and very cynically switched sides at the very last moment. Bose's INA was actually a hastily put together force from former Indian POWs and new recruits from the local Indian diaspora. As such the quality of units was not uniform. The local recruitment was all from the so called non- martial classes, mostly the Tamil indentured labour. Yet they put up a fairly credible combat performance. The performance, in all honesty, did tend to be somewhat uneven and a lot depended on the quality of Indian officers who were placed in command. The KCIOs (Kings Commissioned Indian Officers) and Indian Commissioned Officers (ICOs) tended to do well in combat assignments at levels two to three above what they had held earlier in the British Indian Army. It is the Viceroy Commissioned Officers (VCOs) who were at times found wanting due to reasons of age and lack of adequate command experience. Bose however, tended to view everyone through his personal prism of intense patriotism

and at times felt let down by some elements of his command who tended to break down under stressful combat situations. Despite these limitations, his very dynamic and charismatic personality, had served to weld together this rag-tag outfit into a fairly cohesive and competent force that did put up creditable performances in the roles that were somewhat hesitatingly allocated to the INA by the local Japanese Commanders. That they did so well in the overall circumstances when the tide of battle had turned and the advantages of air power dominance and better logistics, all lay with the enemy is indeed a matter for surprise. This newly and hastily raised force held steadfast, virtually till the bitter end. A great deal of credit must be given to the highly charged and inspirational personality of its Supreme Commander. There was no question of it buckling up like the BNA and opportunistically changing sides in the face of certain defeat. It fought to the bitter end and by and large retained its morale and cohesion through a very taxing retreat across Burma. In the phase two battles of the Chindwin river crossings and the battles of Mount Popa that came later, (and for which it was much better prepared), it would go on to do surprisingly , rather well.

Autonomy of Outcome

Few Commanders have had to lead their armies in such dismal and adverse circumstances. By the time Bose got to lead his INA in real combat, the entire tide of war had turned against the Axis Powers. Towards the end of 1944 beginning of 1945, Germany had collapsed militarily. The Japanese offensive in North East India had turned into full scale retreat. Despite these highly adverse circumstances, the Composite Japanese-INA Force had almost pulled it off against a far stronger enemy with much shorter lines of communication and total command of the air, in the battles of Imphal-Kohima. In gruelling forced marches of over 200 miles and more in such difficult jungle terrain, the INA formations had kept pace with Japanese Army units that were reputed to be one of the best Infantry soldiers then in the whole world. In fact the whole world was then in thrall of the "Japanese superman" who was unbeatable in Jungle warfare. Then the atom bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the massive Russian invasion of Manchuria. Japan surrendered on August 15, 1945. It was all over. Despite this total collapse and unconditional surrender of his war-time allies, Bose displayed amazing tenacity of will. *He exhorted his field commanders that the outcome of the Indian Freedom struggle would be independent of the final*

outcome of the Second World War. It was primarily essential that an Army of Indians was seen by their people as fighting for the Freedom of India. *Even if the INA just managed to engage the British Indian Army in a battle fought on Indian soil, it would be sufficient to trigger a tectonic plate shift in the collective Indian psyche*. It would trigger the process that would hasten Indian freedom. *The primary role of the INA was to catalyse the process of liberation*. Whether it lost or won would be immaterial, the Indian people had just to see it fighting for their liberation and they would be inspired to rise and do the rest. As such the Indian liberation process would be autonomous of the outcome of the Second World War. *Whichever side lost or won, India would be free*. This did not happen immediately as strict war time censorship by the British, had blacked out all news of the INA and its gallant actions. The North-Eastern theatre of operations was far removed from the Indian mainland and the Indian people had little clue of the significant role that the INA had played in this invasion. Fortunately, they got to know of it after the war, when the British, in a most foolish gesture of triumphalism, decided to tell the people about INA they had beaten in the battles of Imphal and Kohima. They wanted to rub the Indians further and if needed,stage another psychological Jallianwalah to overawe the natives. What Bose had predicted so accurately, now became reality. in February 1946.There was an intense wave of outrage throughout the whole country. Two and half million Indian men had come to form the largest all-volunteer army in the world – sans any conscription. This Army was now being demobilised after the war. That is the time when its loyalty to the racially arrogant British rulers snapped suddenly. The revolts first started in the Royal Indian Navy. It soon spread to the Royal Indian Air force. The British will to fight simply collapsed when the mutiny against the British spread to the Army. That was the end. Bose had been vindicated but by then he was lost behind the Iron Curtain. Maybe he was tortured to death. Maybe he died due to the harsh cold and the forced labour in a Russian Gulag. We do not know. Maybe the Quislings sold him out, we do not know for certain as yet. What we do know is his beloved India was FREE. However, all that was then under a highly uncertain future.

Notes on the Size and Structure of the INA

So what then was the actual size of the INA? The official INA history claims a size of 1500 officers and 60,000 men. Considering that it was a three

divisional sized force and the standard division in the Second World War had a strength of some 20,000 men, it all works out rather neatly. The problem is that as per British Intelligence reports, the INA divisions were not up to full strength. Yes, but even then the INA had a sizeable number of Command troops, the Bren Gun Carrier and Artillery battalions and several MT companies, Air Defence Companies and Engineer/ Pioneer companies, besides signal and logistical elements. Besides, there were also the Recruit Training Centres, the Officers Training School (OTS), the Women's Battalion and the Body Guard Battalion. So what then was the actual strength of the INA?

British Military Intelligence (MI) Assessment of INA, November 10, 1944

The British war office has declassified its MI Assessment of November 10, 1944 and it provides a detailed assessment of the INA strength in 1944 after Bose had reorganised the INA. The document states "In 1942 we estimated that about 15,000 PoW (Prisoners of War) might have been suborned, or more possibly coerced into joining the INA. A revised estimate is 41,500.This is based upon the reports of agents and escapees. The latest Axis broadcast claims a strength of 200,000. As the total number of PoW the Japanese had was 70,000, this figure could be attained by extensive recruitment of largely indifferent civilian material". Thus the British intelligence estimates are somewhat tentative. Hard intelligence indicates a strength of some 41,500. This was when the INA had just its First Division of four brigades and the Second Division had almost completed raising. Subsequently a Third INA division was added. Even if an under-strength division is catered for, it could still have a strength of about 7000-10,000 on the lower side. So a final INA strength of about 51- 52,000 is plausible. The INA official history figure of 60,000 therefore is perhaps not too wide off the mark, as the British Indian Army's MI report itself does not discount higher figures. In Mohan Singh's time itself, the reports were of 40,000 volunteers from the POW pool. From an Indian diaspora population of about 3 million in South East Asia, recruiting another 20,000-30,000 was not a very difficult proposition. The only constraint was finances and weapon stocks. The official INA History Figure therefore stands largely corroborated plus -minus 5000. This MI report (November 10, 1944) also speaks of communal intrigues in Mohan Singh's time which saw a number of Sikh officers replaced by Hindu and Muslim officers. However it points out that though

morale and espirit de corps had suffered due to temporary disbandment and communal intrigues that led to replacement of Sikh officers by Hindu and Muslim officers, it seems to have stabilised by now. *It states emphatically that there is no evidence of ill feeling amongst communities* (after coming of Bose).

INA Build up in Burma

The MI report of December 31, 1944 states that the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Guerilla Regiments of the First INA Division were identified in Burma by February 1944. The 4th Regiment of this division was in reserve in Mandalay and this is substantiated by Maj. Gen. Kianis account which appears quite authentic when compared with the MI reports of the British Indian Army. This report also estimates that the Command troops of the INA in Burma included some MT companies and Engineer companies. All in all it estimates that some 12,000- 15,000 INA troops had come into Burma by March 1944. The report states further that the Second and Third division of the INA were being raised by the Rear HQ of INA at Singapore along with more Command troops. The Second Division was ready to move into Burma by mid 1944 and its Infantry Regiment (Field force Brigade) was already on its way to Rangoon. The third INA division was under training in Singapore. The MT (Motor Transport) companies in Burma had some 30 x Three Ton Lorries and 15 x Fifteen Hundred Weights (equivalents of present day one ton trucks). The Report also speaks of a Mortar company with some 6x 3 inch mortar detachments for intrinsic fire support. This MI report gives a total strength of the Subhash Brigade as 3126 with one Colonel as Brigade (Regimental Commander), 4 Majors, 24 Captains, 60 Lieutenants and some 112x 2nd Lieutenants. Detailed rank wise staff tables are included in that report. It mentions that for logistics support this brigade had a total of 2500 bullocks. One battalion had 4x Mule carts. The report lists out the class composition of the battalions and companies and claims that the Third battalion was all composed of Garhwalis with just one company of Kumaonis. It lists out the scales of ammunition which were quite close to the standards of the Indian Army in World War Two.

Andaman & Nicobar Islands

In 1943, Netaji was very keen that some Indian territory should be transferred to the INA. The Japanese had captured the Andaman and

Nicobar islands in 1942. These were a vital naval Base that controlled ship movements towards the vital choke points of the Mallacca, Sunda and Lombok straits. Bose met Prime Minister Tojo and requested that these vital islands be put under the administrative control and jurisdiction of the Azad Hind Government. Bose had then gone to Tokyo, to attend the East Asia Conference as an observer. He had given an impassioned speech there on an Asia sans colonialism and imperialism. At this conference, Gen. Tojo announced his decision to hand over the administration of these two islands to the Azad Hind Government. The takeover took place finally in December 1943. The Japanese Navy was naturally loath to part with such a vital Naval Base and surreptitiously retained control in the background. However Lt. Col. Loganathan was appointed its Chief Commissioner and Netaji renamed these islands as Swaraj and Shaheed. Later he visited these islands. There were some localised rebellions there by the tribes. These were put down with somewhat excessive force by the Japanese forces who were loath to lose control of such a vital strategic asset. Even today, some of the excellent concrete bunkers and pill boxes that the Japanese had built on the coastline can be seen as a grim reminder of that war. These are model pill boxes with narrow slits for firing, massive concrete walls to withstand the heaviest shelling and steel doors and shutters to make that pill-box virtually impregnable. They have now become a tourist attraction in the Andaman's that one has seen personally.

7

Invasion, the Critical Battles of Imphal and Kohima

> *"There in front of you is the road that our pioneers have built. We shall march along this road. We shall carve our way through enemy's ranks or if God wills, we will die a martyrs death. And in our last sleep we will kiss the road which will bring our Army to Delhi. The Road to Delhi is the Road to freedom. On to Delhi!"*
>
> – Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose
> February 03, 1944

Build Up

A recent poll by the National Army Museum in London, had described the Imphal-Kohima battle as the most decisive battle of British Military history. It was 'greatest' in terms of its political, social and cultural impact. *Far more important than the immediate impact of a decisive operational defeat for the Japanese–INA combined forces, was its aftershock that shook the loyalties of 2.5 million Indian Soldiers who were being demobilised at the end of the war.* It was this seminal event that resulted in mutinies in the British Indian armed forces in 1946 and the panic to grant Independence to India just one year later. Coming to the battle itself, in 1944, Gen. Kiani states, there were three Japanese and one INA divisions attacking Bill Slim's 14th Army that had 8 divisions (five Indian, one British and two South African divisions). The 15th Corps commanded by Lt Gen Christenson was deployed in the

Arakans. It had the 5th and 7th Indian Divisions under command. The 4th Corps was deployed in the critical Imphal-Kohima Sector. Commanded by Lt Gen Scooners, it had the 17th, 20th and 23rd Indian Divisions under command. The attackers therefore were virtually outnumbered in the actual area of fighting. However Peter Ward Fay highlights that at the theatre level in Burma, overall, the Japanese also had about 8 infantry divisions. Gen. Kawabe of the Burma Area Army of Japan, had been promised seven Divisons for this spoiling attack on the British forward administrative bases in North East, which they had built up and stocked on the border, in preparation for a major offensive into Burma. Finally Kawabe got eight divisions which were to be used as under:-

- Two would watch Gen. Stilwel and his reorganised Chinese formations in the far North of Burma.
- Three would cover the Arakan and the coast below. A prior strike would be launched in the Arakans to destroy or pin down the British troops deployed there and suck in the reinforcements and reserves into this sector. This it managed to do quite successfully.
- In the centre, Gen. Mutagachi's three divisions of his 15th Army, would deliver the decisive blow against the main logistics nodes of Kohima and Imphal and thereby preempt any possibilities of any British invasion of Burma. In fact Mutagachi planned to penetrate much deeper into Assam, to give Bose's INA a chance to break out into the depth areas of Assam and Bengal and instigate a revolt there.

The amazing fact is that the sheer ferocity of the Japanese– INA offensive cut off the Allied Garrisons at Imphal and Kohima. These were now maintained solely with air support (as Admin Boxes). The most intense battles in Asia were fought here in the Imphal-Kohima region (called the Stalingrad of the East), from March to July 1944. There were attacks and counter-attacks and fierce episodes of hand to hand fighting. Finally, it was Allied Air Power and the weakness of Japanese logistics that turned the scales.

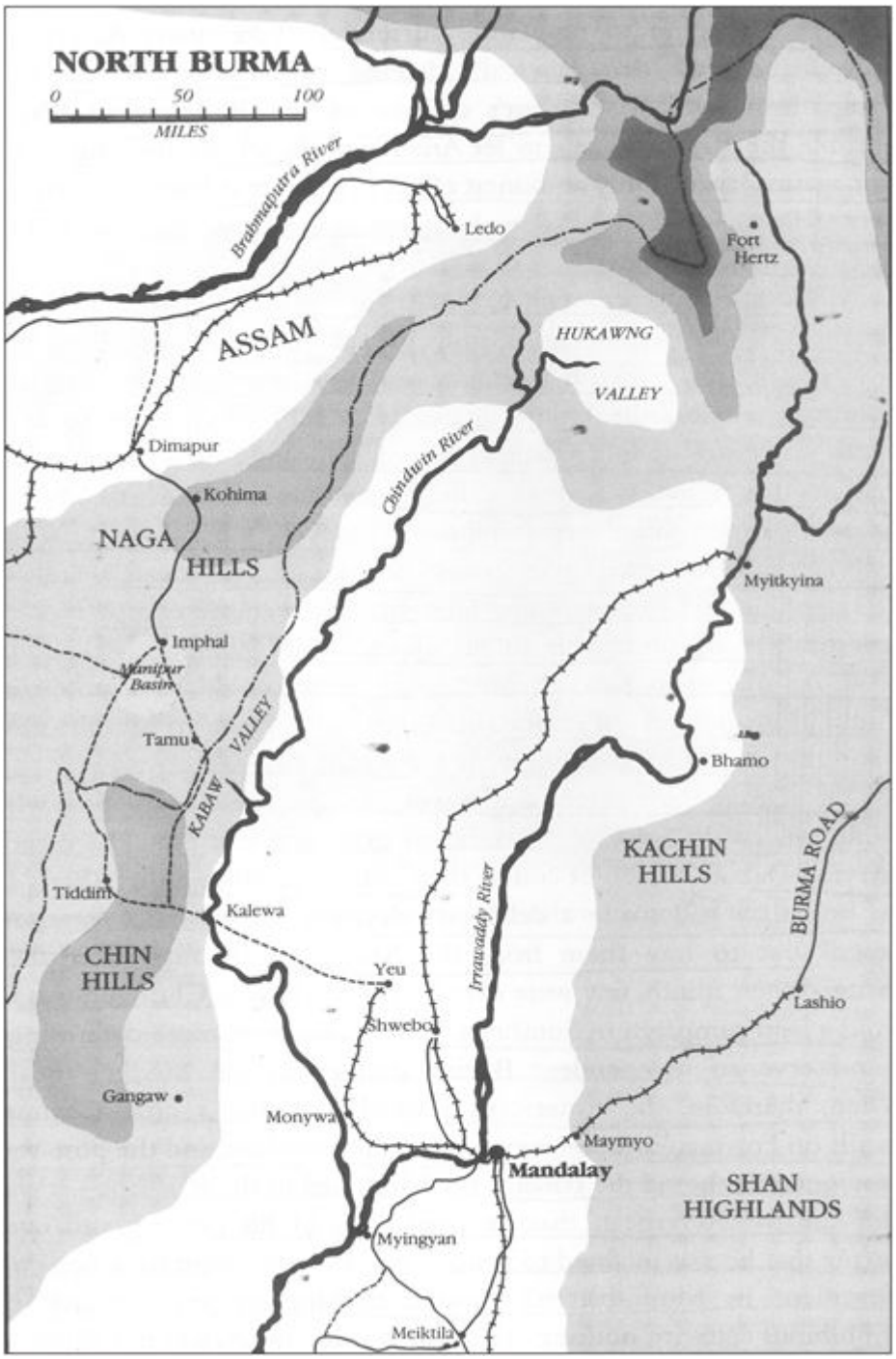
Ranjan Bora writes, "the Imphal campaign, (including the battle of Kohima) will perhaps go down in history as one of the most daring and disastrous campaign in the annals of world history". This operation has often

been compared to the German Operation Wacht am Rhein or more popularly the Battle of the Bulge in the Ardennes in France in December 1944. This was the German Army's last charge in Europe, a high risk counter offensive to throw back the advancing Allies. It was a grim and hard fought battle that almost came within an inch of success. But in the end it failed. The Japanese U-Go and Ha–Go offensives in March- April 1944 were also such a last and desperate charge of the Japanese Army. The amazing fact is that despite the numerous constraints, they almost pulled it off. This is a tribute to the human spirit and shows what courage and tenacity it is capable of displaying. It was a grim and hard fought battle but the Japanese had overreached themselves operationally and logistically. The operation had come two years too late. By 1944 the Japanese had completely lost air superiority and their Navy had lost control of the sea. This had foreclosed any options of operational manoeuvre from the sea. Had the attack gone in 1942 itself, as Col. Hyashi had proposed or even in the next year it had all the chances of succeeding. Without air superiority, the Japanese Army did not have a chance of executing a Malaya or Burma style Blitzkrieg through the Jungle in 1944.

Setting the Stage

Gen. Kiani informs us that in September 1943 the 1st (Subhash) Guerilla Regiment was moved to Burma. Soon thereafter, the rest of the First INA Division was moved to North Malaya with its HQ at Taiping and commenced preparations for the forthcoming move to the India-Burma border. The Field Force Regiment had been left in Singapore because its heavy weapons could not be employed, especially as there was a severe dearth of transport both by land and sea. Priority was accorded to the Japanese Divisions that were being moved forward for the initial break–in battles. When the First INA division, finally did move to Burma, it had to leave behind its Bren gun carriers and heavy 4.5 Inch Howitzers. This also resulted from an unwillingness on the part of the Japanese local commanders, to give the INA formations a significant 'break in role' in the combat. They were to be deployed initially as light screens for flank protection, intelligence and subversion units or mostly in the follow on support role. The Japanese concept entailed that the better equipped Japanese divisions would affect the "break in battles" and the INA regiments would then pass through to enter Assam and Bengal hinterland and conduct

guerilla warfare. That is why the First INA Division was forced to leave behind its integral artillery unit and Bren Gun carrier battalion. The Japanese simply did not provide the transport and these heavy weapons had to be left behind in Singapore, right till the end of the war. Despite the remonstrations of Bose and the support he got from the Japanese political leadership, the local Japanese Formation commanders were able to have their way. The First INA division thus was consigned to a support role, at best in regimental groupings. Three out of its four Regiments (Brigades) saw live combat. The fourth had remained in reserve.



At that build up stage there was a lot of discussion and debate about where exactly on the India-Burma border, should the forthcoming Japanese–INA offensive be launched. Personally, Bose was of the opinion that it should be from the Arakans towards Chittagong. His rationale was that it would take the INA earliest to reach the Indian mainland and this

region had a lot of the supporters of the INA. Hence they could count on a popular uprising to support their operations and create difficulties for the British. In any case, Bose had felt that the primary role of the INA would best be served if it could catalyse a general uprising in the whole of India and instigate mutinies in the units of the British Indian Army. To attain this political objective, he wanted to reach the Indian mainland at the earliest and become visible to the general Indian population. That is why he wanted the offensive launched in the Arakans to reach the Bengal plains earliest. Once there he would get the local support to instigate an armed uprising. General Kiani and others looked at this operation more from the tactical and operational art perspective. Kiani felt:-

- The British were more poised to guard against precisely such an attack via the Arakans. It was for this reason they had, in sheer panic, burnt all the local riverine craft in the Chittagong region and created a man-made famine in Bengal in 1942, in which about 3 million Indians had perished. Hence an attack on the North-East, focused more on Imphal-Kohima, clearly had greater chances of achieving surprise.
- An attack on Chittagong entailed opening a sea-based line of supply at some stage. Japan had lost its control of the sea and as such a sea–borne invasion or even a supply based on Sea lines of Communication (SLOCs) would not be feasible now. The attack on Imphal-Kohima was entirely based on land lines of communication and hence safer, in the altered context.
- The Imphal valley provided a flat bowl surrounded by rugged hills. As such, it provided a secure base to operate in Assam. There were two options for further breakout, either Westwards towards Silchar and Sylhet or Northwards, towards Kohima and Dimapur railhead.
- Even if the Japanese–INA force failed to advance beyond Imphal, it would still be able to secure a sizeable and defensible area in the Imphal valley, which, because of the surrounding hills, could be easily defended. It would provide a secure base for the establishment of a provisional government on the soil of India.

Japanese Plans

There was a school of thought in the Japanese hierarchy that felt that the Japanese forces must strike beyond Kohima and go for the Dimapur railhead itself. That had been the bold offensive design suggested in 1942 by Col. Hayashi Akira of the Japanese Southern Army HQ. In 1944 it was supported by the Japanese GOC 31 Division, Maj. Gen. Sato, who wanted to break out for Dimapur and seize the rail head and the huge stocks dumped there. However, there were voices of caution in 1944 that felt that first Imphal and Kohima must be reduced, before an assault was attempted on Dimapur itself. Reportedly Gen. Rene Mutaguchi, the Army Commander of the 15th Army held this view and reined in Gen. Sato. This was uncharacteristic caution on the part of the Japanese and made the operation fall between two stools. It was radical but not radical enough. Despite the caution in setting final objectives and depths of penetration, the plan's primary flaw was overconfidence in the logistics aspect. It was wholly premised upon capturing the enemy stores and provisions dumped in Imphal. There was no fall back option or Plan B.

Air Power Aspects

It failed to cater for the radically altered context in which the Allies now had clear air-superiority. In Malaya, the Japanese Zero fighters and Naval Aviation had completely outclassed the British Buffalo Brewester fighters in 1942. By 1944, the Japanese Air force and Navy were completely overstretched and largely outclassed by the latest American and British machines. The Americans had fielded superior fighters in terms of the Mustangs (that had self sealing fuel tanks) and the British had the Spitfires and Hurricanes. The American pilots had special G-flying suits that enabled their pilots to execute much sharper, high G–turns and dives which would cause the Japanese pilots to black out. The Americans had also developed the proximity fuse for their anti-aircraft guns that made them far more lethal. Above all, the Japanese industry simply could not keep pace with the American military-industrial complex which was now churning out brand new fighter aircrafts, ships and munitions at a much faster pace and in far greater numbers. The Japanese industry had to import the bulk of its raw materials over sea lanes of communication. These in turn had to be protected by their ships and aircraft's and these defensive tasks diverted huge amount of resources.

The Cryptology Coup

The Americans had used rudimentary computers to break the secret Japanese cipher codes and had exploited this advantage to prevail in the naval battles of the Pacific, which now raged between the aircraft carrier battle groups of the two navies. Eleven Japanese carrier battle groups and 18 American carrier battle groups were now locked in a life and death struggle in the Pacific. The Japanese were getting simply overwhelmed by the rate at which the American factories could churn out new armaments. In desperation, the Japanese threw in their Kamikaze or suicide pilots that shook the Americans for a while but ultimately failed to stem the tide. The war- winning factor however was cryptology. The Americans had used the rudimentary computers of that era to break the Japanese cipher codes. Apparently the Americans had used these code breaking devices (Enigma machines) to get information about the flight of the plane of the Japanese Admiral Yamamoto (who had led the attack on Pearl harbour) and were able to shoot down his aircraft over the Solomon Islands and kill this key Japanese war leader. This code breaking had helped the Americans win the critical battles of Midway and Gudalcanal. A series of such Intelligence coups about Japanese aircraft's, tilted the scales.

Situation on Burma Front Early 1944

By early 1944 both sides were on the starter blocks for a major offensive. In fact the Japanese offensive of Ha-Go and U-Go were designed in the form of a large scale spoiling attack to pre-empt and delay the anticipated British offensive into Burma. In late 1943, Gen. Wingate had launched his major Second Chindits operation, hopefully to carry out a "turning manoeuvre" from the air flank. The British requested the Americans to release a huge amount of Dakota transport aircraft for this very novel turning manoeuvre from the air concept. A huge armada of Glider borne troops had landed in the rear of the Japanese armies in Northern Burma. As it turned out,however,the landing areas were not judiciously selected and did not draw serious Japanese counteraction as was hoped. They threatened not the attacking forces of Mutagachi but the rear of the two Japanese divisions deployed against the Chinese forces of Gen. Stilwel in the North. Had this operation been carried out in the Bhamo-Mytkinya area instead of the Shewbo–Kalewa area, the impact would have been far more serious. About

16,000 troops were landed in these hastily cleared Glider fields. Wingate himself was killed taking off in a rain storm from Imphal but his operation went on. Most of the men (about 21 battalions strong) were written off due to disease and exhaustion. They were not available to Field Marshal Slim subsequently, as Mutagachi launched his attacks on Imphal and Kohima. However, this Chindits operation made up the mind of the Japanese Army, which now decided to pre-empt further Allied offensive operations into Burma. It stopped its dithering over the plan for a pre-emptive offensive into India. The Japanese now decided to launch a large scale spoiling attack which would delay and disorganise any projected British offensive into Burma. The Japanese were quite stung by the Chindits operations and now were keen to hit back. Even then, paucity of transport and poor road communications slowed down the build up and delayed the Japanese attack. Initially the attack was planned for January 1944 but was then postponed to March. Gen. Mutaguchi was confident that Imphal would fall in just a month, (by end April 1944 the latest). The simple fact was that this Japanese offensive had come two years too late. By that time the Japanese had lost air-superiority and the crux of their logistics support plan based on the capture of enemy stocks and supplies was rendered meaningless by the new British tactic of Admin Boxes, supporting cut off garrisons purely from the air.

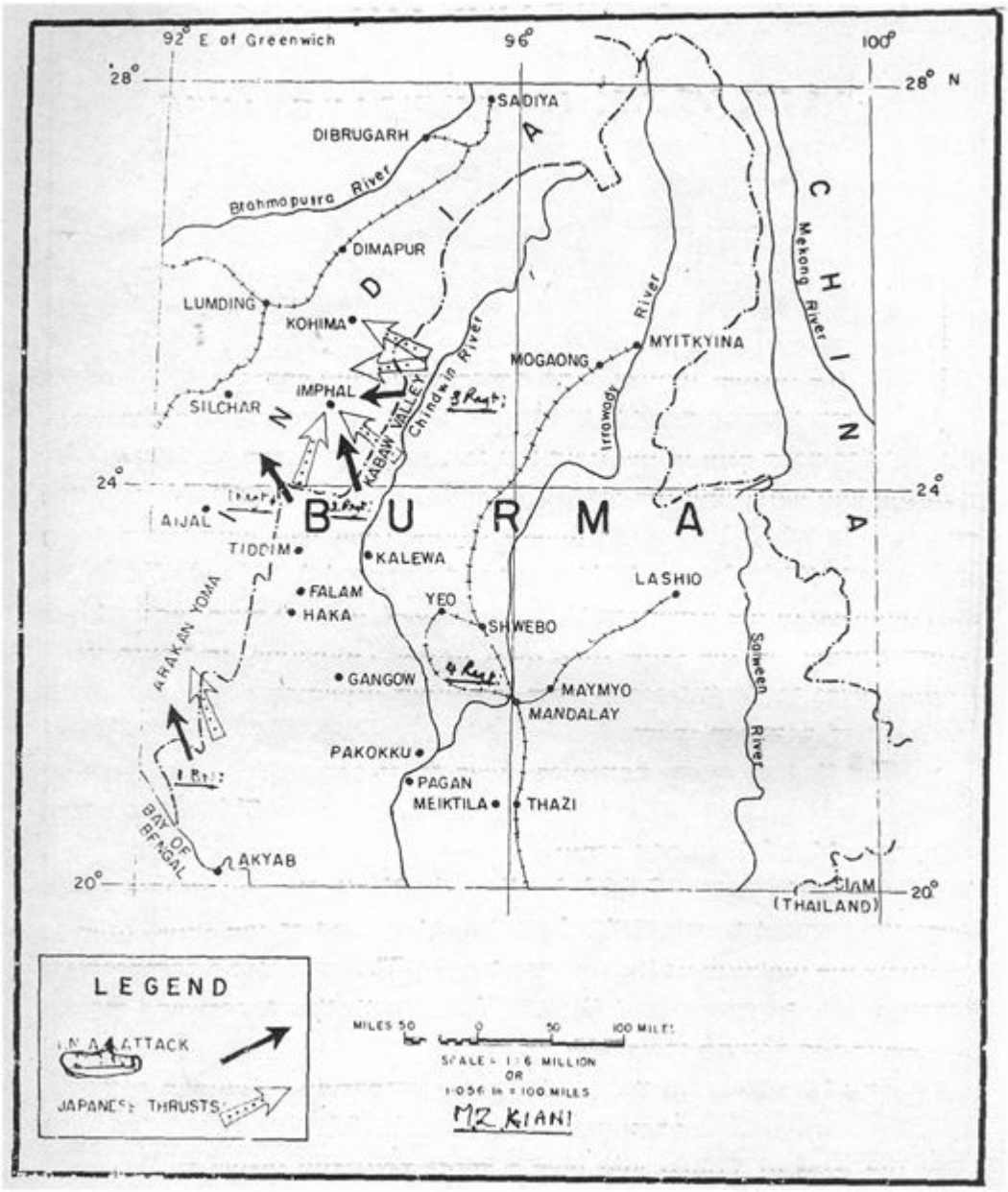
Initial Japanese Operational Plans

Despite these inherent constraints, the Japanese plans of the Burma Army under Gen. Kawabe were fairly well conceived. The essence of the Japanese plan was to reinforce the dominant British mindset about the centre of gravity of the Japanese main thrust. The British expected it to come via the Arakans and be aimed towards the port of Chittagong and its hinterland (This also strongly hinted at the possibility of a mole in the INA HQ who had possibly divulged these plans to the British).

- So the Japanese launched a feint attack over the Mayu range in January 1944 (towards the coastal strip of the Bay of Bengal lying south of Chittagong). An INA battalion was used to launch this feint to deceive the British and draw their attention and reserves away in this Southern direction. Later this lone INA battalion did surprisingly well against the troops of the British West African Division.

- This was followed by the Japanese three divisional sized offensive into the Arakans that pulled in the British 5th and 7th infantry Divisions into this sector, exactly as the Japanese had planned.
- The Japanese 15th Army under Lt. Gen. Rene Mutaguchi, launched the main thrust towards the Imphal-Kohima area, using the 15th and 31st Japanese Divisions. The First INA Divison accompanied the 15th Japanese Division led by Maj. Gen. Yamamoto. 33 Division under Maj. Gen. Yanagida struck from the Arakans but towards Bishenpur and Imphal from the South.

A Japanese attack in this central sector would serve to drive a wedge between the British forces and the Chinese Forces under American General Joe Stilwell that were then operating in North East Burma (Northern Combat area).These Allied forces were tasked to open the Burma Road to Chungking. The problem was that the Japanese expected that once surrounded and cut off, the British garrisons would surrender tamely, as they had done earlier In Malaya and Burma. This would enable them to capture huge stocks of enemy supplies and continue with their offensive. They had thus planned to clear the Imphal–Kohima area, well before the Monsoons. In the changed context however, the besieged garrisons in Imphal and Kohima, as well as in the Arakans, formed Admin-boxes that were wholly supplied from the air and stuck it out doggedly. This completely upset the very ambitious Japanese plans of seizing the enemy stocks of rations etc to sustain themselves logistically. The Achilles' heel of this plan was in its over-ambitious logistics support component which relied on an early capture of enemy stocks. When the British garrisons refused to surrender and stuck it out doggedly with massive air support the Japanese plan based on swift capture and exploitation of enemy stocks did not materialise.



Despite the massive political support that Bose now had in Tokyo the local Japanese commanders were not fully certain about the combat performance of the INA. As such, for the initial operations they had relegated it to a support and follow on role. Perhaps given the overall paucity of attacking forces, this was not an optimal utilisation of available combat power and was perhaps one of the flaws in the plan. Bose, for reasons of prestige, however, wanted the Indian formations and units to be the first to set foot on Indian soil. The Local Japanese commanders felt it was not a

practical proposition. Let us now examine the initial moves of the INA into the Burma theatre.

Preparatory Moves, First INA Division

The First (Subhash) Regiment (the recently created and most elite regiment of the INA) reached the India-Burma frontline and was deployed in two parts. Netaji intended it to be his elite and crack assault force and for this purpose one battalion each was taken from the three existing INA regiments. Bose personally spent time with them to motivate and fire up these men who would be the first to enter battle and Bose hoped that its men would be the very first to set foot on Indian soil. One Battalion under Maj. Rauturi was tasked to operate in the Kaladan valley of the Arakan Region. The other two battalions under Lt. Col. (later Maj. Gen. Shah Nawaz) relieved the Japanese Forces in the Chin Hills in the area of Haka and Falam. As stated Bose had spent a long time with this elite formation, trying to imbue it with his own burning zeal and enthusiasm. This force protected the flank and rear of the Japanese 33rd Division (under Maj. Gen Yanagida).This was tasked to advance towards Bishenpur and threaten Imphal from the South. Ratouri's troops were the first to see action in February 1944, and put up a good fight against the 81st British West African Division in the Arakans. In preliminary operations, an SSG Team under Maj. Mishra had induced a British Indian platoon to surrender. This was a good augury and really cheered up the Force.

The balance of the three Brigades (regiments) of the First INA division had moved off to Rangoon towards the end of 1943 and early 1944, as and when transport could be made available. The Special Forces were also being built up. Priority however was given to the assaulting Japanese formations. The bulk of the INA division was now concentrated at Mingaldon, an important air field some 10 miles North of Rangoon. Meanwhile the advance echelon of the Azad Hind Government had also started moving up to Rangoon. Most of the Provisional Government's Ministers moved up. The plans were to take over charge of all captured Indian Territory, as soon as possible. Training camps were held for civilian administrators (Azad Hind Dal).The Rear HQ of the INA (manned by the Chief of Staff Col. later Gen. Bhonsle) continued to stay on at Singapore along with the IIL. The women's Rani of Jhansi regiment also moved up to Rangoon along with the nurses.

The Japanese regarded the Women's regiment as a liability and were quite unhappy about it.

Protocol and the Prestige of Bose

Peter Fay records a very interesting episode that occurred at this stage, which gives a clear indication of the transformation in Indo- Japan relations that had occurred with the arrival of Bose in Japan and the rapport he had established with the highest echelons of the Political leadership in Tokyo. It is said that Bose had moved up to Rangoon with his HQ. Gen. Kwabe of the Burma Area Command was also in town and invited Bose for dinner. *Bose declined on the grounds that Kawabe had not as yet come and called on him!* This would have been unthinkable in the first INA of Mohan Singh. Bose often flaunted his connections with Tokyo and usually got away with it in his many battle of wills with the local Japanese Field commanders.

Conduct of Operations

By March 15 the D day set by Gen. Mutaguchi, the Japanese Army and the INA had concentrated about 120,000 troops, over a 200 kilometers frontage, along the Chindwin River. They had done this in complete secrecy. This massive concentration and move went totally undetected by the British spies in that area and nor did it show up in air recce. The Japanese march, discipline, camouflage and concealment were excellent. All moves were strictly by night. There were three Japanese Divisions and one INA division now poised to launch this major offensive. The campaign lasted from March 15 to July 9, 1944. Recently, British military historians have called the Imphal-Kohima battles as the most decisive and critical of all campaigns fought by the British in that war. From the logistics support aspect it was inordinately ambitious. Lt. Gen. Mutagachi- Commander Japanese 15th Army had based his logistical support plan on seizing Imphal and Kohima by the end of April 1944 and capturing the British Logistic supplies stored therein, to sustain his force. This was the Achilles' heel of this ambitious plan.

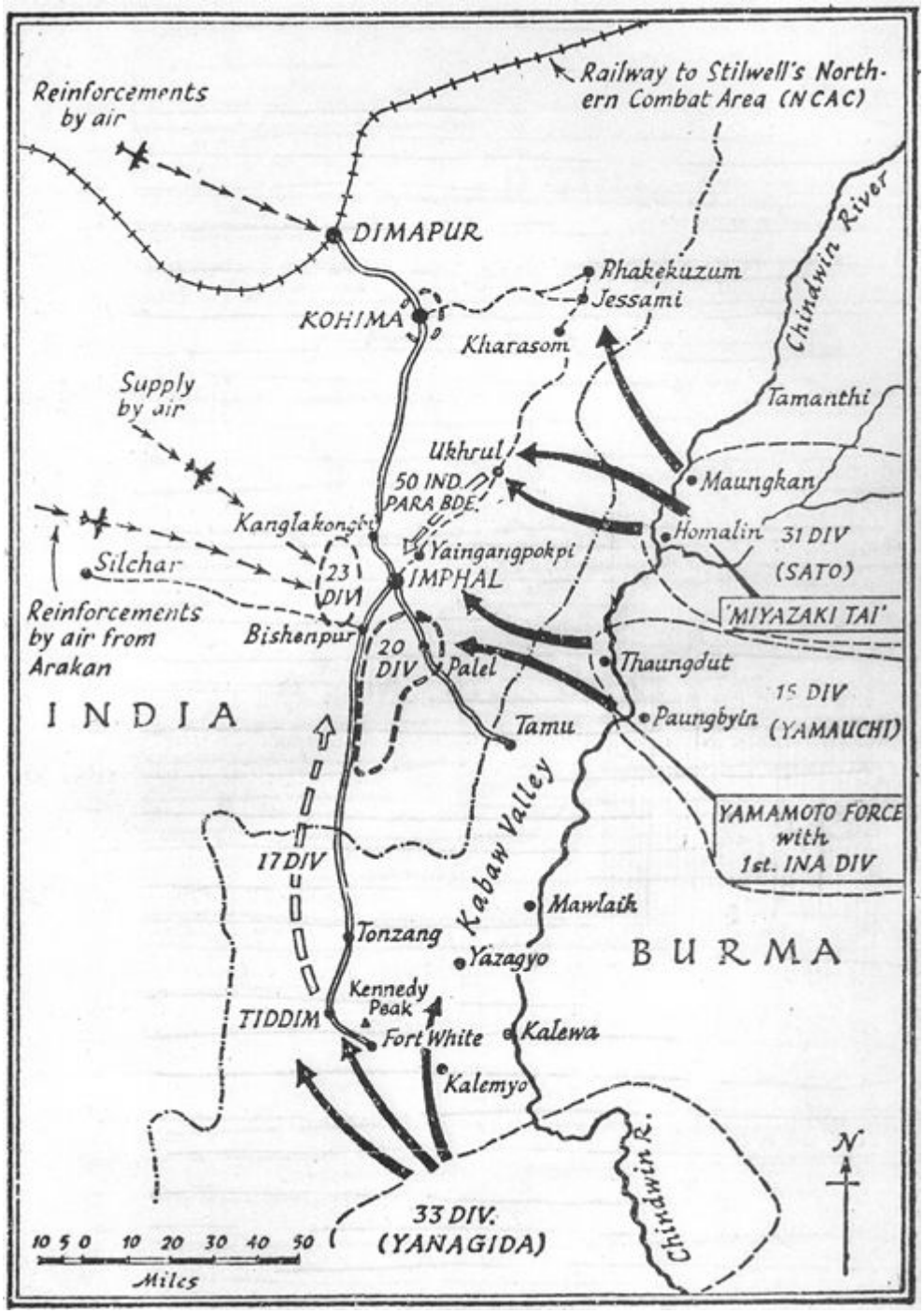
Deception Operations

As stated earlier, an INA battalion was the first to launch a deception operation towards Chittagong from the Southern coastal strip of what is

now Bangladesh. The First battalion of the Subhash brigade had been selected to participate in the diversionary attack. It left on February 03, 1944 and entrained for the west. It left Rangoon for Prome. From Prome it marched 80 miles across the Arakan Yoma to Tanugup on the Bay of Bengal. Then it moved in small craft up the coast to Akyab. It was then sent due North up the Kaladan river valley and by March 15 it had reached Kaytuktaw, some 30 miles East of the Mayu peninsula. It did very well against a West African Division which the British pushed forward. The INA Battlion now advanced up the Kaladan valley. It crossed the India-Burma border 100 miles north of Akyab in May 1944 and reached a place called Mowdok. It was a creditable performance and the unit had breached a psychological barrier by setting foot on Indian soil.

Arakan Operations

The Japanese meanwhile had attacked in the Arakans, to reinforce the dominant British mindset about where the main weight of the Japanese-INA attack would come. The Japanese three divisions sized force in the Arakans launched daring infiltration operations through dense, uncharted forests and isolated both the British 5^{th} and 7^{th} infantry divisions in this area. In fact, for a time they created panic by attacking the HQ of the 7^{th} Division itself. Both these divisions were encircled and the Japanese expected them now to surrender, as they had done earlier in the Malaya and Burmese operations. To their surprise, the surrounded British divisions formed Admin Boxes that were now wholly supplied from the air and held out grimly.The monsoons set in and the Japanese had no option but to pull back. Once the threat abated, the British now sent in their aircraft in a massive air transport operation to airlift these encircled divisions to the more critical and threatened Imphal-Kohima sector where the Japanese 15^{th}, 31^{st} and 33^{rd} divisions had launched the main assault. The attack of the three Japanese divisions via the south should have tied down the two Allied Divisions (the 5^{th} and 7^{th}) in that sector itself. However, the complete domination of the skies had enabled the British to turn the tables and upset the entire Japanese design of battle. Air superiority had negated the impact of the highly successful diversionary operation of the Japanese, designed to tie down two British divisions in the wrong sector. These two divisions were later pulled out and flown to the highly threatened Imphal-Kohima sector.



15th Army Offensive in Imphal-Kohima

The overall aim of the Japanese offensive was to forestall any British invasion of Burma in 1944.The design was to first overwhelm the British in the Arakans, involving all their reserves in the battle for Chittagong the sector in which they expected the main Japanese attack to come and open the gateway

to East Bengal. Having drawn British attention and reserves to the South, Mutaguchi would launch his major offensive towards Imphal-Kohima and deliver the coup de grace. By May the monsoons would begin and enforce a pause in the fighting. Thereafter the Japanese and INA could strike out towards Assam and East Bengal. That was the essence of the plan. The Japanese 15th Army offensive proceeded as follows:

The Japanese 33rd Division Operations: This division under Maj. Gen. Yanagida attacked in the south. Its aim was to advance up the road to Tiddim and Tamu and on to Bishenpur and Imphal itself. With the standard tactics of deep infiltration designed to bypass, envelope, isolate and destroy, the Japanese columns (along with elements of the INA's Subhash Brigade) were highly successful initially. They undertook long and very difficult marches through the dense jungles and achieved total surprise. They advanced up the Manipur Valley from the south via Tiddim, Tamu and Bishenpur towards Imphal. The strong detachment of the Tiddim Force was backed by field artillery and tanks. This was to reinforce the impression that it was the main thrust and suck away the British reserves to the south. The Japanese tanks were engaged heavily by the British artillery. As such the Japanese were forced to clear the steep hills on either side of the road to enable their tanks to advance up the TiddimTamu road. The built-in contingency plan was that if this attack succeeded, the First INA Division would be diverted to reinforce this attack. That is why the Japanese had hesitated initially in committing the First INA Division. The way to Imphal lay through the Palel Airfield and the INA was tasked suddenly to clear it (the INA operation will be covered in detail subsequently). For the ultimate success in Imphal, a great deal depended upon the Japanese 33rd Division advance along the Manipur river valley from the South via Tiddim to Dimapur and Bishenpur towards Imphal.

As stated, the British Forces had by now been given two years to study and dissect the Japanese tactics of deep infiltration and envelopment. They now had complete air superiority and had utilized this to devise effective countermeasures. Bypassed British garrisons now did not surrender timidly, as they had done earlier in Malaya and Burma. They instead formed Admin Boxes that were now supplied entirely from the air. These surrounded garrisons now hung on desperately against the repeated Japanese attacks. This unhinged the logistical support plans of the Japanese army that were based on capturing enemy stocks and supplies. The Japanese land-based

lines of supply were most tenuous and came along a single dirt track. This virtually got washed away in the heavy monsoon downpours that followed. As stated the Japanese force of three divisions in the Arakans had surrounded and cut off the British 5th and 7th Infantry Divisions, but failed despite repeated attacks to overwhelm them. With their own logistics tail hanging in the air and no enemy stocks captured as planned, the starving Japanese units had no option but to pull back. As the pressure in the Arakans abated, the British flew in their transport fleet of aircrafts to pull out the 5th and 7th Divisions and redeployed them in the more seriously threatened IV Corps Zone in the Imphal-Kohima Area.

The Japanese 15th Division Operations: The Japanese 15th Infantry Division (under Maj. Gen. Yamuchi) and the Yamamoto Force alongwith the bulk of the First INA Division had launched the main thrust in the Imphal Sector. Since the Japanese attack plans depended on the capture of Imphal and seizing the supplies and stores dumped therein it was central to the entire operation. After crossing the Chindwin River, Mutaguchi's main strike force had made rapid and stunning progress. It hurled itself repeatedly against the garrison of Imphal in desperate and ferocious attacks. The defenders held on grimly. For a long time, despite the massive asymmetry of resources, it was touch and go. The Allies flew in reinforcement in terms of the Para Brigade and redeployed the formations committed earlier in the Arakans, to break the encirclement of Imphal-Kohima.

Operations of the Japanese 31st Division: The third Japanese division, the 31st Infantry Division led by Maj. Gen. Sato, undertook the most arduous operation to cut off Kohima from any reinforcements coming from the direction of Assam, Dimapur and the Kohima Pass. The British had thought that no force larger than a brigade size could reach the Kohima Pass because of the very difficult terrain and the problems of supply. The Kohima Pass was now attacked by a whole division (the 31st Division), which had carried its artillery on the back of elephants. To facilitate its attack through such difficult terrain this division had been allocated some 3,000 horses and 5,000 oxen. They carried their anti tank guns with 300 rounds each. Each man carried as much rifle ammunition and three weeks rations. 17 mountain guns were carried on the backs of elephants. The British were astonished by the ferocity and weight of the attack. Very soon, the force secured the pass and moved forward. It had soon laid siege to Kohima itself.

Unfortunately, the Japanese did not bypass Kohima and head for the railhead of Dimapur as the Japanese Southern Army had planned to do in 1942. The expectation was that with Kohima thus isolated and all possible reinforcements to it blocked, Imphal would fall rapidly to the other two divisions attacking from the South and North East. Thus the IV British Corps operations in Manipur would collapse. It is said that Gen. Sato, the commander of the attacking division in Kohima itself, was keen to bypass Kohima and head for Dimapur but was prevented by Gen. Mutaguchi, his Army Commander who wanted Imphal reduced first (Another set of writers claim it was the other way around and Mutagachi had insisted on Dimapur as an objective. I doubt it very much as Mutagachi was the Army commander and if he wanted it, it would just have to be done. That was the command culture of the Japanese Army) To facilitate these operations, a strong detachment of the Tiddim Force alongwith Field Artillery and tanks was pressing on from the East via Tamu and Palel towards Imphal. This well-equipped detachment with significant amounts of artillery and armour was designed to pose a credible threat in the Arakans region and suck away resources from the critical Imphal battle. The Japanese plans however had an inherent flexibility and they were prepared to exploit success anywhere – even if it occurred in the Arakans area. That is why the move forward of the INA First Division was delayed initially to see how the overall battle would work out. Then, as irrational optimism grew in Mutaguchi's 15th Army HQ, about the early fall of Imphal, the INA Division was hurriedly committed piecemeal.

Progress of the Battle

The Japanese 31st Division pursued the 17th Indian Division as it withdrew from the Manipur Valley. This Indian Division was led by Maj. Gen. Cowan. The Japanese Division moved with great speed and succeeded in repeatedly cutting off large parts of this division. They were however unable to destroy it. As they came closer to Imphal, they now had to fight another British Indian Division. As the Japanese attack in the Arakans had petered out the British now airlifted the 5th and 7th Divisions from there and positioned them in Imphal. In more ways than one, Imphal was now being turned into a Stalingrad. The only difference was that Imphal was being attacked by just two Japanese Divisions, who were making up for their lack of numbers, by

their amazing fighting spirit and tenacity of will. Even such an awesome display of the Samurai spirit, however, was to fail in the face of the sheer and inexorable military logic of numbers, air superiority and fatal logistical weakness.

The Japanese 33rd Division therefore was held up at the key position of Bishenpur. A track from here also led to Sylhet (now in Bangladesh) via Silchar. The Japanese columns made an attempt to infiltrate towards Imphal, about 15 kms away. The jungles however had ended and they now had to move in the open, plains terrain of the Imphal valley with hardly any vegetation cover. The infiltrating columns were caught in the open and heavily engaged by the British and American Air Forces and by concentrated and intensive artillery fire by the defenders. These pinned down the attackers in the open and prevented their move northwards.

This is where, perhaps, the entire First INA Division should have been thrown in with its heavy equipment (such as there was) for the critical Battle of Imphal. It was however used piecemeal and for largely protective tasks like securing vulnerable flanks when it was sorely needed to assist the main attack. The Japanese Commander of the 33rd Division now also became apprehensive about an attack on his flanks from the direction of Silchar. This was an optical illusion and needlessly inhibited his plans to rapidly advance northwards and throw everything into the critical battle of Imphal. This sudden caution was quite out of character with the Japanese style of command. This Japanese Commander (who was regarded as one of their best), was later blamed for this failure to progress operations northwards with speed and replaced. He should have put to optimal use the artillery and tank resources that he had been allocated to advance across the open terrain of the Imphal valley that was being turned into a major redoubt by the British. It was a critical 'Do or Die' battle. The Japanese Army desperately needed the supplies at Imphal and the hesitation and overcaution about a threat from Silchar proved fatal as it slowed down the speed of the advance to imphal.

Imphal, Reverse Stalingrad

The British 15th Army Commander, Field Marshal Slim, however had fully grasped the criticality of the Battle of Imphal. He was now throwing all his resources into it. He had taken out the 5th and 7th Divisions from Arakans

and was rapidly building them up onto the Imphal Garrison. To defeat the siege of Kohima, he was airlifting troops there. Peter Fay writes, "The Anglo–American airlift carried Brigg's 5th Division and part of Meervey's 7th directly to Imphal from the Arakans and kept them there. It also brought out thousands of wounded and sick. In such operations the willingness to fight is directly proportional to the certainty and speed with which a soldier believes he will be evacuated in case he is hit/wounded. At the height of the aerial effort, which went on for months, the daily tonnage lifted was more than twice what the German 6th Army had received when it was cut off near the Volga eighteen months earlier. Air supply made possible by borrowed resources turned Imphal into a Stalingrad in reverse." Bad luck also played its part. The Japanese Army Commander had rushed in two Japanese battalions as reinforcements to this sector. In a critical situation where every man mattered, these two units misread their orders and went instead into the Chindwin River valley. This highlighted a major flaw in the Japanese military system, the lack of reliable signal communications and an overwhelming tendency to try and impose one's plans upon the enemies. This usually needs a preponderance of resources. *The Japanese relied rather on a preponderance of courage*. When that superlative courage was combined with superiority in airpower, the Japanese won with resources that were far lesser than the optimal specified for attack in all other armies. The Japanese reliance on the ferocity of their Samurai– fighting spirit –was designed to make up for their paucity of resources. This asymmetry of spirit usually made up for the resources on the ground. Beyond a point it could not however, compensate for a painful lack of airpower and logistics support.

Gen. Kiani comments, that this Samurai-style of fighting also entailed the accepted tradition that a Japanese Commander would never ask for reinforcements. It entailed a "*loss of face*" to bid for additional troops and resources than those originally allocated to him. The only hint that the Japanese formations involved in a "*Do or Die*" battle would give that they needed more troops, was to inform their commander that they were prepared to fight to the last man! It was then upto the senior commander to take the hint, assess the situation and send reinforcements if he deemed it feasible and necessary.

Gen. Kiani's and other Indian accounts of these battles give some rather touching insights into the cultural ethos of the Japanese military. What was its greatest strength –its unmatchable fighting spirit that stemmed from the

traditions of the Samurai and the Codes of the Bushido – also became a limiting factor in this battle. The Spartan traditions were so pronounced that they militated against the Science of War Fighting. We have numerous accounts of the Imphal-Kohima battles from the British side. These are some of the very few accounts of the fighting as seen from the side of the Japanese and their INA allies. They provide many striking insights into a vastly different culture of war fighting that stems from a passionate and intense devotion to the cause of one's country and one's people. The INA officers and men had had an invaluable opportunity to view a starkly different military context and culture in incandescent action. There are very significant lessons to be learnt here.

Meanwhile, the Japanese Task Force on the Tamu-Palel Road– (called the Yamamoto Force after its commander), post its initial success on the Chindwin River, had rapidly advanced on the Tamu-Moreh and then on to Tengupal inside Indian territory. This Force was supported by the INA Special Groups and advanced rapidly, in the process pushing back the British 20th Division under General Gracey (General Gracey later went on to be the C-in-C of the Pakistani Army). The good news was that at Moreh, a huge supply dump of the British Indian Army had fallen into the hands of the attacking Japanese Forces. This had greatly eased their logistical problems and was an unexpected bonanza for the entire Attack Force and the subsequent INA Regiments that came up to this sector in April and May 1944.

The Yamamoto Force had advanced rapidly but was finally held up ahead of the Shenam defile in the Chin Hills, just a few miles west of the Palel Airfield. The Division operating south of Ukhrul (the 15th Division) had also made rapid headway initially. However as a stream of British reinforcements flew into Imphal (from the Arakans), the impetus of this attack was slowed down and then halted. Imphal proved to be a bridge too far for the Japanese. They were now in desperate need for reinforcements and supplies. None were forthcoming. The British garrisons however, were being reinforced on a daily basis by the regular reinforcement with additional forces. The battle was now turning into a bloody stalemate. Meanwhile the supplies captured at Moreh were fast running out and the rains had started. The Japanese land-based supply line was washed out and nothing was coming up the Chindwin River. The Japanese senior commanders should have read the battle and called off these futile attacks

and pulled back their forces to the line of the Chindwin. A pull back in the end May or early June would have saved the bulk of the force from disaster. However both Mutagachi and his superior Gen. Kawabe refused to permit a tactical withdrawal for the sake of prestige and honour and by sheer exercise of will forced their divisons to persist with these futile attacks almost through the Monsoons. Peter Fay says Mutagachi found it very hard to admit that the operation had failed. He had been pressurising the Burma Area Army HQ to let him persist. Finally he knew it was all over and said so to his Boss Gen. Kawabe. It was Kawabe, who in a sudden role reversal now put his foot down and insisted that he must take a final bash at it. So the hopeless fight dragged on to July and simply added to the misery of the starving and famished troops. Withdrawl was finally allowed only on July 18 1944 and by then it was too late. The heavy monsoons had taken a fearful toll. The monsoons had simply washed away the tenuous Japanese lines of supply and well over more than half the attacking force was lying sick and famished with hunger. It was an incredible feat of sheer endurance and tenacity of will but Japan's ambitious offensive had ended in an unmitigated disaster.

Combat Performance of the INA

Having seen the conduct of the major Japanese offensives in the Imphal-Kohima area, let us now examine more closely, the combat performance of the INA in this operation. Maj. Gen. Zaman Kiani has left behind a very detailed and fairly objective account of this operation as seen from the INA perspective. He points out that the very concept of the employment of the First INA Division was somewhat flawed. In a situation of force asymmetry between the attacking and defending forces (the amazing fact is that the Japanese were almost outnumbered two to one in the critical Imphal-Kohima area), a concerted employment of the INA Division in the critical and resources-starved Imphal sector could perhaps have made a significant contribution. The Japanese Field Command displayed great rigidity in their planning by sticking to the theory that the regular Japanese divisions would affect the break in and the INA Guerilla Regiments would pass through and fan out into rear areas of Assam and Bengal to instigate unconventional warfare (UW). The INA division was thus forced to leave behind its artillery and AFVs, which could have made a significant difference, if employed in a

concerted fashion in the battle for Imphal. After all, the Japanese 33rd Division had used elephants to move forward its field artillery in the Kohima and Bishenpur sector and had also taken up its tanks. The INA's 4.5 inch artillery guns and Bren Gun carriers were left behind in Singapore due to paucity of transport to move them forward. Priority to move forward had been accorded to the attack echelons of Mutaguchi's 15th Army.

As stated earlier, the bulk of the INA First Division had put up at Mingaldon, an airfield 10 miles north-west of Rangoon in the middle of March 1944, just as the 15th Army's offensive on to Imphal had commenced. The INA's 2nd and 3rd Guerilla Regiments were ordered to move forward from Mingaldon. The journey was by rail till the railhead of Yeu and then by motor transport (if available), till the Japanese base camps/launchpads called Shwegyin and Kalewa, which lay on both sides of the Chindwin River. From Kalewa, the First INA division was to march forward about 110 miles along the Kabaw valley to Tamu, just inside the India-Burma border. It was then to await orders for its next move.

The Second Guerilla Regiment moved by train to Yew. It left the train and then moved by motor transport to Shwegyin. The last leg of the journey to Tamu was on foot. They crossed the Chindwin River using the ferry and reached their launch pads.

The Third Guerilla Regiment followed the Second. It moved by train to Yew. There it was informed that no motor transport was available for the move forward to Kalewa. It had no option but to commence its long approach march on foot, all the way from the Yeu railhead to Kalewa and beyond till these tired troops reached past Tamu and Mintha. From the Yeu railhead itself the Indian troops were required to carry their ammunition and rations on their backs, all the way upto the frontline. Their next hope of more ammunition and rations would only materialise once enemy stocks were captured. The enemy air attacks were highly active. Allied fighters flew low at treetop levels and strafed and bombed everything that moved. The only protection was to move by night. The Shwegyin-Kalewa ferry site along the Chindwin River was also under incessant air attacks and hence the crossings were only done strictly by night. Even on moonlit nights, this ferry was attacked by enemy fighters. Besides, Gen. Kiani writes that the further north one went from Rangoon by rail, the railway stations and particularly the railway engines and wagons were under incessant air attacks from marauding enemy fighters that ranged freely all over the area. To protect

these, Gen. Kiani observed, the Japanese had put up special sheds at all important railway stations. These consisted of bamboo structures filled with small pebbles that were designed as improvised blast pens that would protect the engines from air attacks with machine gun fire from the top and sides.

Gen. Kiani writes that a few captured motorcars had been made available to the INA. In these, Gen. Kiani with key members of his General Staff from the Divisional HQ and the Commander of the Second Guerilla Regiment (Col. I. J. Kiani) moved ahead of the assault echelons to reach ahead and tie up reception facilities of the main columns coming on foot. They reached Maymyo where Gen. Mutaguchi's 15th Army HQ had been set up. Gen. Kiani met Gen. Mutaguchi. His whole HQ was rife with excitement and uncalled for optimism. They expected this operation to be a repeat of their performance in Malaya and Burma. They forgot that the British, by then, had two full years to study the Japanese tactics and devise effective countermeasures. Success makes armies over confident and rest on their oars. They tend to repeat themselves ad nauseum with the old winning formula and that can be fatal on the battlefield. When Gen. Kiani met Gen. Mutaguchi, the Japanese commander told him excitedly that Imphal was about to fall in the very near future. He now advised the INA to rush forward and join the Yamamoto Force advancing from Tamu towards Palel. Speed, he said was of the essence otherwise they would miss the historic occasion and the chance to enter Imphal even as it was about to fall.

Command Cultures

This highlighted the ill effects of the lack of robust signal communications because of which Gen. Mutagachi was totally out of touch with the real battle situation in and around Imphal. In such a fluid and fast moving battle, (where reinforcements are being streamed in by air and not simply by land), it is vital to read the battle quickly and react in time. Hugh Toye writes that Mutaguchi had moved his HQ to the Hill resort of Maymyo, on the Shan plateau. This was far from the area of combat but Mutaguchi did not mind. His Headquarters had been there for the last full year. He had planned the operation in detail and had sent his divisions forward. He saw no need to mange operations day by day or even minute by minute." "My officers do every thing," he told a visitor who saw him in his garden, "I just tend my

Roses". This episode gives an interesting insight into the Japanese command culture that seems so much like the German Auftragstaktik or Misson Type orders, where the top level commander just spells out his intent to his subordinate commanders and trusts them implicitly to further his intent on the battle field. Details of execution are left entirely to his juniors in the field. This is far removed from the Anglo- Saxon military culture of detailed control and oversight which stems possibly from a basic distrust or lack of faith in one's subordinates. (people won't do anything unless they are kicked or closely supervised).The Japanese military system saw intense discussions between seniors and subordinates in the planning sessions. These helped to crystallise the plan to which all levels of the hierarchy were committed, simply because they had all contributed to its evolution and had war-gamed it to perfection. Having evolved the plan, marshalled the resources and positioned the forces for its execution, the Japanese Commander simply sat back and left it to his subordinates to enthusiastically execute the plan they had all signed up on. There was total and implicit trust between the commanders and their subordinates. That is what Mutaguchi was trying to say when he sat back in his garden and started tending to his roses even as the battle for Imphal had begun. The entire essence of the Japanese military culture entailed imposing ones plan on the enemy's plan, whatever might be the plan of the enemy. The German style of command was absolutely similar but with one essential difference. In Mobile warfare (Blitzkrieg style operations), the German senior commander usually moved forward and kept himself close to the forward troops to monitor the battlefield for any fleeting opportunities that might present themselves or to react to any sudden developments. Otherwise he just sat back and left the operations to "the recon pull of his corporals and captains" who moved fast and did everything possible to further the intent of their higher commander by seizing and exploiting any fleeting opportunity they saw on the battle field. This system works very well when the initiative and the command of the air are with us. However once these attributes slip to the enemy its dangerous to delegate operational control so totally in the hope that everything will go as per plan. In any case situational awareness is absolutely essential for any senior commander directing operations at every level.

Undue Haste in Palel

The HQ of the First INA Division was then quickly set up at Chamol, about 15 miles uphill from Tamu. Everything was speeded up and put in a fast forward mode. This indecent haste now militated against a proper and methodical launch of the force, which was being committed to combat for the first time. The Japanese seemed to suggest that it was all over and unless the INA hurried forward, it would miss the glory! This was a highly subjective estimate of the situation on the part of Gen. Mutaguchi and completely out of tune with the objective reality. The enemy resistance was hardening, not crumbling and the need was for methodical high-intensity operations and not careless pursuits of a fleeing enemy. The Yamamoto Force was moving forward rapidly and was getting worried about its flank protection. The 2nd INA Guerilla Regiment had assembled at Tamu and had then moved forward on the Mombi jeep tracks, built by the British to support their defence line on the Chindwin. They moved up to a place called Khanjol near Mittongkhunu.

The 2nd INA Regiment was still trickling in and was yet to get their automatic weapons when the Japanese informed Gen. Kiani that the Yamamoto Force was going to attack the Palel airfield. The second Brigade of the INA should right away join this attack and assault the Palel airfield from the left flank.

Kiani writes that the Regiment had just reached Tamu after marching 100 miles by April 22. It had hardly reached Mittongkhunu when they received orders to attack Palel in a tearing hurry. This entailed a forced march over the very difficult hilly terrain of the Chin Hills. None of their commanders had been able to recce the route and much less the final objective of the attack. Initially, the Japanese had given very low priority to the move forward of the 1st INA Division. Now suddenly, even as it was entering the Forward Assembly areas, it was ordered to attack an objective it had not even reconnoitered or studied. The whole rationale was that the British in Imphal were under concerted attack from three directions and were likely to cave in anytime. Hence speed was far more vital than methodical preparation and build up. The Regiment was forced into the attack sans its automatic weapons and signal sets.

Attack on Palel

Seeing this sudden crisis situation develop, a battalion worth of ex-Indian Army soldiers with combat experience was hurriedly pooled together from the whole Second INA Brigade. An adhoc composite task force was rapidly formed and tasked to move forward with utmost speed and attack the Palel airfield. They had no mortars for fire support and just no wireless sets. These were yet to arrive. The Composite Task Force (CTF) moved out under the command of Maj. Pritam Singh (an experienced staff officer from the Divisional HQ) who had volunteered for this action. Such adhoc groupings and units rarely work on the battlefield (the only successful example is the Meghdoot Force raised and formed during the 1965 Indo-Pak War, which was able to execute successful raids. It later became the fore-runner of the Para Commandos and now the Special Forces). This lead force raced ahead while the balance Regiment under the Regimental commander, Col. Shah Nawaz, followed a day later. The rapid move forward of this Composite Task Force at such short notice was itself a feat. There was one tragedy however. The portion of the front on which the INA Battalion was advancing was held by Gurkha troops, who were till then quite impervious to INA propaganda in Hindustani (which they did not understand). Had there been an Indian unit, the INA Battalions could have had far greater success in subverting some Indian troops and like Maj. Mishra– suddenly opening a window of opportunity for infiltration into depth areas. Mishra was faced by a platoon of Jodhpur Lancers, a state forces unit from Rajasthan who spoke the same language and were ethnically similar to the troops of the INA facing them. They were amenable, therefore, to patriotic appeals to ditch the colonial masters and join the Freedom struggle. The same unfortunately, could not be said of the Gurkhas ,where language barrier inhibited communication.

The 2nd INA Regiment had reached Kanjol a Forward assembly Point on April 28, 1944. The CTF was formed and left on April 30. It was able to attack the enemy position only on the night of May 2, 1944. There were no radio sets to maintain liaison with the Japanese forces attacking Palel from the right flank. As such, the Indians were denied the artillery support that was available to the Japanese.

The CTF gained contact with the Gurkhas and tried to appeal to them over loudspeakers and loudhailers. The British officers had coached the Gurkha troops. They pretended to surrender and put up a white flag on their picquets. The INA commanders were taken in. Happily they came out in the open and moved non-tactically to take the surrender of fellow Indians. The

Gurkhas opened fire and they suffered heavy casualties. They were forced to withdraw. Badly stung, they attacked at night and gained a foothold by wounding the Bren Gun detachment. However by night fall, they were forced to fall back due to enemy pressure.

The INA now launched repeated attacks on the Gurkha positions but all surprise had been lost and the enemy was fully alerted. They had no supporting fire to keep the defenders' heads down. These gallant assaults failed. However, in the fighting, Gen. Kiani claims, they were able to destroy 12 allied aircrafts on the ground on the Palel airfield. He does not elaborate how this was done, whether by a raid, or by intense small arms and mortar fire directed on the air field. They now waited for the rest of the Regiment to build up, so that attacks could be resumed in greater strength. The Regiment's columns meanwhile were spotted by an enemy patrol and heavily engaged by intense artillery fire and repeated aircraft attacks that strafed and bombed this column. They were caught in a relatively open area and suffered over 50 killed and several more wounded in a short while. One gallant Medical Officer of the INA, Capt. Akbar Ali fearlessly moved about through this heavy pounding, attending to the badly wounded casualties and saved precious lives even as he was under repeated and heavy air attacks. There was absolutely no chance now of gaining any element of surprise on this axis. The regiment's attack was called off and it regrouped at Khanjol. It was still waiting for its automatics and mortars to come.

In the meantime the British at Palel had received heavy reinforcements that were airlifted from the Arakans front. They moved out of Palel and attacked Khanjol. There was heavy fighting and the 2nd INA Regiment was forced to fall back. However, it regrouped and launched an immediate counterattack. There was fierce hand to hand fighting and the British were forced to evacuate Khanjol and fall back. The 2nd INA Brigade now began intensive patrolling and launched a number of successful raids and forays on the British positions. These yielded them, among other things, cigarettes and rations that they were now so desperately short of. The INA Brigade now moved up and set up positions at Mittongkhunu, north east of Khanjol and at Mittong, north of Khanjol. One INA patrol from Mittongkhunu ambushed a Gurkha patrol and killed 15 soldiers. The honours for the treachery at Palel were now even.

On May 15 (as if on order), the monsoons broke out in the Chin Hills and surrounding areas and completely curtailed all large scale operations.

The rains converted the Kabaw valley through which the Japanese-INA supply route lay, into a veritable sea of mud. Dry streams turned into raging torrents. It made it impossible for any wheeled traffic to move. This caused a complete stoppage of all supplies from the start of June 1944 onwards. The INA and Japanese troops had now to survive only on the dwindling stocks of British supplies they had captured at Moreh. These were fast petering out. The Japanese and INA troops were almost on starvation rations. There was no resupply of ammunition.

The British were now in a far better position. Using aircraft they had built up their stocks for the monsoons. Their roads were open and occasional para drops and air landed sorties were possible. The British saw the weakening of the INA position. Despite the ongoing rains, they decided to take advantage of the demoralisation and famished state of the INA troops now at the mercy of the monsoons. The 2nd INA Regiment had got only a 15-days window of opportunity to fight between May 01-15, 1944. Their entry into the war had been delayed to give priority to assaulting Japanese divisions. Only once, transport was freed from this task, were they hurriedly pushed forward and launched into very hasty and ill prepared attacks. Then their supply line was wiped out by the incessant rains. Short of ammunition, weak, hungry and debilitated by malaria and dysentery and constantly under British shelling the INA Forces grew weak. The British now launched repeated attacks to retake Mittongkhunu. The miracle is that it was still not a walkover. Seesaw battles raged for days. A portion of this front was held by the civilian recruits from Malaya. The British had withering contempt for the fighting qualities of the Tamil indentured labour. To their intense surprise, these Tamils fought to the last man, last round and were wiped out but refused to surrender. Even in defeat there was great dignity. The INA was forced to withdraw finally from Mittongkhunu, primarily due to severe logistical constraints. It must be said however, that despite the severe operational and logistical constraints, the 2nd INA Brigade had fought reasonably well and given a fair account on the field. The very fact that in a situation of a complete logistical disaster, the INA Forces retained their combat cohesion right till the very bitter end was itself a miracle of sorts given how hopelessly adverse the situation was.

- **The Third Regiment's Combat Performance**

As stated, the Third Regiment of the INA division under Col. Gulzara Singh had been moved forward by train to the railhead at Yeu. They were to get motor transport there but none was available. They simply started marching forward, lugging their ammunition and rations with them. They marched about 250 miles all the way from Kalewa, up the Kabaw valley to Mintha. They reached here in the third week of May. By then the monsoons had already broken out in full fury. The entire lines of communication were washed out. The Regimental HQ was set up at Narum, some 15 miles north west of Mintha. The tasks assigned to this formation were:-

- To protect the right flank of the Yamamoto Force
- To carry out harassing raids on the British lines of communication in the direction of Wangjing on the Palel-Imphal Road
- Fill the gap between the Yamamoto Force and the 15th Japanese Division on the Right.

Except the exhausting 250 mile long approach march, the 3rd Regiment was far luckier than the 2nd Regiment, in that it was not rushed pell-mell into serious offensive action for which it did not have the automatics, fire support or even wireless communications. Despite being a light infantry guerilla force, the Second Regiment had been assigned hard core assault formation tasks without an iota of preparation or fire support. By the time the 3rd INA Regiment reached the monsoons had set in thereby precluding any major offensive operations. In any case, by then a stalemate had set in on the front. The 3rd INA Regiment launched a successful action against Sita Hill an important hill feature overlooking the area to the North West. The 2nd INA Regiment had suffered inordinately heavy casualties due to enemy air action and artillery. Its ranks had thereafter been seriously depleted by disease and starvation. The Third Regiment sent detachments to help maintain the supply lines of the Second Regiment. Besides this, its military activity was largely confined to aggressive patrolling, ambushes and small-scale raids on enemy lines.

- **The First INA Regiment**

The First INA Regiment (The Subhash Brigade) under Col. Shah Nawaz Khan had played a very active role in the initial operations. Unlike the 2nd

and 3rd Regiments, it had been inducted in time, (in the light of Bose's desire that Indian troops should be the first to set foot on Indian soil). One of its battalions under Col. Raturi had entered the Arakans. The rest of the regiment was in the Haka-Falam area, securing the right flank and rear of the 33rd Japanese Division. It was heavily engaged in skirmishes with the Chin levies of the British Lushai Brigade operating from Aizal in the west. Both Gen. Kiani and Col. Shah Nawaz were keen that this Regiment be moved up to Palel front as quickly as possible to help the 2nd Regiment that had been seriously engaged.

The Japanese somehow resisted this strongly. They were under serious pressure on the Kohima-Ukhrul front. They wanted to urgently relieve the pressure in Kohima, where the British were trying desperately to relieve the stranglehold on the road linking Kohima to Imphal area. By this time, the monsoons had washed out the INA supply lines. Switching this regiment around and moving it to the newly assigned area in the monsoons season, was a nightmare. With the incessant rains and cumulative fatigue, any operations were becoming impossible. Incessant rains deprived the men of their sleep and they had no warm clothing, not even jerseys to protect themselves from the cold on these 6-8000 feet high hills being lashed by constant rains. Nevertheless, the First Regiment commenced its move. Col. Shah Nawaz Khan and his recee parties had moved up to Ukhrul and the balance regiment were following up painfully, when the general Japanese withdrawal from Imphal commenced on July 18, 1944. Only at the very end, once Bose put pressure on the Japanese high command, the First Regiment was allowed to rejoin the division. It was too late to employ it usefully on the Palel front to retake the positions that the INA had lost. Around the middle of July, the boys of this Regiment, exhausted due to the rather unnecessary moves to and from the various sectors, began to withdraw towards Kalewa to join the rest of the First INA Division. Peter Fay describes this grim denoument with a twinge of humour. When the INA officers reportedly asked a Japanese officer collleaogue how the Imphal operation was going. He replied hesitatingly…Slightly not very well!" This was a classic understatement but full of a grim humor..

- **The Special Units**

The Special Units had the most exacting and hazardous tasks. The Bhadur Group led by Lt. Col. Shaukat Malik had moved with the Japanese 31

division attacking towards Kohima. This Group had broken through the British lines and had set foot on Indian soil on March 22, 1944. It had captured Moirang village in Manipur, and hoisted the Indian Tricolour there for the first time. This had led to great jubilation and the INA thereafter celebrated Moirang day in memory of the Tri colour being hoisted on Indian Soil for the first time. The Bahadur Group had suffered the heaviest casualties as they were in the forward most areas. They suffered the most due to supply problems. There were simply no means of evacuating the sick and wounded. They fell back with the Japanese units to which they had been attached. Some of these men who were captured by the British were summarily shot or tortured and disposed off later. Most of the torture was done in the underground cellars of the Red Fort and the Attock Fort.

The Withdrawal from Imphal

The enormity of the situation now slowly dawned on the Japanese High Command. They had gambled heavily on the capture of Imphal and its vast store of supplies but they had lost. A miss was as good as a smile. That they had almost pulled off the impossible was a small consolation. The attack had been launched two years too late. The air and naval domination had turned completely. The enemy had had two years to study the Japanese style of offensive operations and come up with viable responses, most of which relied on the exploitation of air power. The monsoons had simply washed off the Japanese-INA lines of supply. Their ranks had been severely degraded by sickness due to malaria, typhus and dysentery. They had suffered heavily due to enemy air action, especially in the open plains of the Imphal valley where the jungle canopy cover was far less dense. Now they were reduced to abject starvation. It was all over. It was a human tragedy of the most monumental proportions. A general withdrawal was ordered from the Imphal front on July 18, 1944 and the Japanese Army and INA fell back to the line of the Chindwin River. Frankly this should have been done much earlier to conserve needless casualties. Gen. Sato, GOC 31 Japanese division had in fact said so but had been apparently overruled by Mutagachi, who till the very end had hoped that Imphal would fall and resolve the severe logistical problems of the attacking Japanese forces. The tragedy was, that there simply was no Plan B. “The whole ethos of the Japanese Army,”says Raymond Callahan, “reinforced by Mutaguchis personality, forbade breaking off the offensive.”

The Tragedy and Triumph of Imphal

There is just no point reinforcing a failure and absolutely no justification for persisting with a failed offensive and incurring needless losses of men and material, simply to save face. A tactical withdrawal in such circumstances has no military stigma whatsoever. It is simply military common sense to cut losses and preserve ones forces to fight elsewhere and another day. This is where Gens. Kawabe and Mutaguchi can be faulted for their tragic failure to read the battle correctly and give orders to break off a failed engagement, well in time. The Japanese Prime Minister Gen. Tojo resigned in the wake of the Imphal disaster (though for different reasons). Despite the failure of the Japanese Higher Command in this critical operation, the sheer heroism of the troops and their willingness to obey orders which caused them such harrowing levels of suffering, simply serves to highlight the Samurai spirit of not just the Army of Japan but also of the INA which it had helped raise and train and which seemed to have imbibed its military culture and ethos of militant nationalism as its prime motivational credo. Subhash Bose had been able to infuse the Samurai spirit of militant nationalism into this hastily formed force. That he succeeded in such a short time only serves to highlight his unbounded charisma and his sterling qualities as an inspirational military leader. The combined Japanese–INA force had suffered staggering casualties of about 40,000 dead. *Rarely has such a large body of military men suffered so much in recent history and gone through such harrowing experiences of disease* (Malaria, dysentery, typhus, Cholera, snake bites, scorpions, leeches, poison flies and Naga sores crawling with maggots feeding on human flesh), *abject starvation, constant enemy bombardment from the air and his heavy guns, and yet hung on so very desperately, mounting futile and senseless attacks till the bitter end, when most lesser men would have fled in sheer panic and been routed and hunted like animals.* It had not just been a logistical nightmare, it had been an unmitigated supply chain disaster. Given the late stage of the war the offensive was too little too late. *It was foredoomed to failure, yet men who knew this possibly in their heart of hearts, still gave it every ounce of commitment and courage they had. In the bargain they suffered most intensly, as few fighting men have suffered in recent years. Yet they did not break down and* they did not curse or rebel against their military leaders.s They simply did what they saw as their bounden duty to their Gods and their country and they stoically accepted every bit of unimaginable pain and suffering. *That is the triumph of the*

human spirit of mind over matter. Such intense suffering of almost 15,000 Indian soldiers in the Kohima and Imphal jungles could not possibly have gone in vain. When their countrymen came to know of it, something in their souls snapped and they rose as one to free themselves from the shackles of 200 years of abject slavery. The INA may have lost the battles of Imphal and Kohima but it won the war for India's independence by triggering the widespread civilian unrest and then the armed mutinies in the Royal Indian Navy, The RIAF and finally the units of the British Indian Army itself in February 1946. By August the next year, India had been given its freedom. Bose had been proved right. The grant of Independence to India would be independent of the outcome of the Second World War. Whichever side won, India, Bose had asserted, would be free and before long.

Conclusion

The Japanese offensive into India had came two years too late. Had the Japanese followed through in 1942, there was only one Indian division defending the Northeast. By 1944 there were 8 divisions facing them. Japan had lost air superiority and naval supremacy. All that was left was the spirit of the Samurai. That almost carried the battle. However, logistically the campaign was disastrous. The Japanese field commanders were not certain about the combat ability of the INA. It was yet to be proven in the battle. As such they were not willing to use it in the initial assault and break in battle. They wanted to confine it to the guerrilla role and secondary tasks like flank protection. Bose was keen that Indian troops must spearhead the assault into India. The Japanese field commanders had their way. Regiments of the INA first division were not given meaningful tasks. There was a severe paucity of pack animals and logistic resources. They were on the lowest priority. Despite these daunting constraints they fought well. The Japanese failure to take Imphal and capture its resources doomed this operations to failure. The Japanese senior command failed to recognise the logistical disaster. They persisted with their offensive when they should have cut their losses and fallen back. This led to a complete disaster and the assaulting Japanese INA forces suffered most terribly. The INA may have lost the tactical battle of Imphal-Kohima, but two years down the line – it would win the war of Indian independence by triggering an uprising amongst the Indian people and revolts in the Indian Armed Forces in 1946.

8

Retreat From Burma

"Your colossal sacrifice will bless your names and proudly proclaim to the world that you their forebears fought and lost the battles in Manipur, Assam and Burma but that through temporary failure you paved the way to ultimate success and glory."

– Subhash Chandra Bose

"What did you mean you people, by going on fighting? We had armour, artillery, you chaps had nothing. But instead of surrendering you fought. It was madness. Why did you do it? Why didn't you come over?"
"Of course it was madness," Prem replied. "A revolutionary army lives on the spirit of madness."

Conversation between Col. Prem Sahgal of the INA and
Maj. Gen. Gracey, Goc 20 Indian Division
April,24, 1945

The Perils of Inflexibility

The Japanese military system was characterised by two aspects, great courage and highly creative and innovative solutions. Thus the Japanese pioneered the use of aircraft carriers and naval aviation in the Second World War. They would debate and discuss an operation threadbare before they

launched it, analyse each aspect with actual models (as they did before Pearl Harbour) and crystallise their plan. Once the plan was formulated however, they would adhere to it rigidly and simply try and impose their plan on the enemies' plan. As long as they had air superiority, this worked very well in Pearl Harbour and in the initial operations of 1942 in Malaya, Singapore and Burma. Here they had launched brilliant and high-speed blitzkriegs, characterised by deep infiltration, bypassing and annihilation/ surrender of the bypassed elements. Air superiority, leveraged upon the legendary courage of the Samurai, was the key to victory. Once air superiority was lost the equation changed significantly. The Japanese still made brilliant plans but once these were launched, the Japanese Commander left execution entirely to his subordinates. Signal communications in Burma were rather poor to non-existent (especially due to screening in the jungles)and once the planned operation was launched, the Japanese higher commanders seemed unable to read the battle, analyse the enemy's reactions and modify the plans to suit the changed conditions. The Japanese simply did not seem to believe in the dictum that 'no plan survives its execution'. *The Plan just had to be made to work*. The Japanese Cultural constraints of implicit obedience of orders, seemed to dictate that the higher Commanders intent just had to be implemented come what may. This made the planning in Burma theatre rigid and inflexible and incapable of responding to a paradigm shift in the enemies' tactics and doctrines. The fact is that between 1942 and 1944 the British had two years in which to study the Japanese military methods and tactics and devise counter-measures. Air superiority had now passed on to the Allies and control of the third dimension enabled the dominant air power owner, to devise creative and unorthodox solutions to military problems in the surface operations on the land and on the sea. On the high seas, the Americans simply copied the Japanese with more of the same. They fielded 18 Aircraft Carrier Battle Groups (CBGs) to Japans 11 such CBGs in the Pacific theatre. Deep infiltration and cutting off the enemy in isolated pockets, was the core of the Japanese military method on the ground. On the Indo-Burma border, the British devised the tactics of maintaining cut off and isolated military garrisons solely by air in what was called Admin Boxes. This had knocked out the entire basis of the Japanese plans premised upon inducing a rapid collapse of bypassed enemy elements and rapid seizing of their logistics stocks and supplies. Due to very poor signal communications, the Japanese corps commander in Burma, virtually isolated himself from his

attacking formations and failed to read the fast moving battles or even listen to his field commanders like Gen. Sato who wanted to break out to Dimapur. He failed to grasp the magnitude of the logistical disaster that had overtaken his divisions and reasons of loss of face, tended to make him very rigid and in-flexible and forced him to persist with his flawed original plan. There was a serious disconnect between the Army commander and his divisional commanders and this was due to an absence of responsive communications. In the Japanese command culture of implicit obedience, dialogue and discussion are confined to the formulation stages of the plan. Once the Plan is formalised, execution is rigid and axiomatic and does not seem to cater for fast changing situations on the battle field. Bose could connect with his formations only through the Japanese military hierarchy and as such was even more isolated from the execution phase than his Japanese counterparts. In such a situation of force asymmetry between the attacker and the defender (the Japanese-INA forces were outnumbered by the defenders in the critical Imphal sector) the use of the INA as a light guerilla force in North East India, (in a situation where it had no direct connect with the population of the Indian mainland) was seriously flawed. To wage guerilla warfare, the guerilla force must have the support of the local populace and be able to merge with it. Ethnically, the INA rank and file was so different from the Chins, Naga and Mizo tribes (who were largely Christian) and whose language and culture was so alien to the INA. They had no troops from the local area who knew the local dialects and culture. To cater for the abject lack of logistics backup, the Japanese Army was forced to commandeer all local resources and this had made them highly unpopular with the local tribes and had served to alienate them. In such an ethno-graphic profile and alien human terrain, guerilla warfare actually suited the British more than it did the Japanese-INA combine. That is why Bose wanted these operations to be launched towards Chittagong, to reach the right "ethno-graphic or human terrain profile" at the earliest. The decision to attack in the North East was taken on considerations of achieving tactical and operational level military surprise. In the changed circumstances, Bose was absolutely right. The INA formations should have been used in a more conventional format as a regular combat division. This is where the Japanese field commanders had hesitated. They were not sure of how the INA would perform in actual combat and hence they rigidly stuck to their original concept that the better equipped Japanese formations would

execute the break in operations and the light guerilla forces of the INA would pass through to conduct guerilla warfare in the rear in Bengal and Assam. A failure to read the battle and respond to the significant change in enemy tactics alongwith rigid and dogmatic adherence to the original plan, led to the logistical disaster of June 1944. Few Armies in recent military history have suffered so much due to starvation and disease and complete superiority in the air of the enemy. *The sheer scale of human suffering simply numbs the imagination.* The heartening factor however, is that despite the magnitude of the disaster, the morale of both these Armies remained intact. There was no undignified rout and pell mell withdrawal. The Japanese kept attacking till the very end against impossible odds. With any other army, such a withdrawal would have easily turned into a total rout. The Japanese-INA combine still managed to break contact and retreated in reasonably good order. One military historian comments that the retreating Japanese Army was protected by nothing else save its formidable reputation.

The British expected the INA to disintegrate completely in such terrible circumstances and surrender in droves. The miracle was, that despite the intensity of human suffering involved , the INA morale held. Despite the fearsome toll taken by disease and starvation, the retreating INA units maintained their organic cohesion and good order and mlitary discipline. In 1942 the British, Australian and British Indian Army divisions had disintegrated completely and been routed by the Japanese who had command of the air. The British and their allies had surrendered in droves.

The simple fact remains that the INA did not. About 40,000 men of the Japanese-INA force had died (Maj Gen Mohan Singh puts the combined Japanese casualties close to 54,000). British military intelligence estimates of INA casualties alone placed them between 7000- 9000 in this phase of the fighting alone. Nine thousand casualties out of a total force of 15,000 is a colossal figure. Sixty percent of the INA rank and file which fought were killed/wounded.

In the stark tragedy that overtook the Japanese and INA divisions on the India-Burma border, we can actually see the glimmerings of a great triumph- the triumph of the human spirit against intense pain and suffering. In the sheer intensity of that suffering, lays the seeds of a miracle that would happen two years later in 1947.

India would become free.

The INA's Retreat through Burma

The Japanese high command hid the news of this disaster for as long as it possibly could. The Japanese press mentioned it as "a move to shorten the lines of communication". The mind numbing scale of the logistical disaster that had taken place only became known by degrees. People were shell-shocked by the scale of the setback. Bose must have been equally shell-shocked by this sudden development. The general order for retreat was given on July 18, 1944. It was made known to the INA HQ at Mayomyo only around end July and some put it even later (first week of August 1944). By that time the emaciated remnants of the attack force, the walking wounded and the sick began to pour into the hospitals and slowly the enormity of the disaster leaked out to the people. A lot of emotional capital had been invested in the attack on India by an Army of Liberation. *'Dilli Chalo'* (Onto Delhi) was a rousing slogan. Former Prisoners of War were now getting closer to their homeland and their families. They were no longer lackeys of the Empire they were getting back as liberators of their motherland. Bose's fiery rhetoric had almost whipped them into a frenzy and they had gone to battle with songs of fervour on their lips.

The massive setback in the battles of Imphal and Kohima came as a great shock. It was the end of a long cherished dream–a hope for going back home as heroes and liberators. The dream had been stopped in its tracks and the Army of Liberation was checked and rolled back. The Indian soldiers were now being pushed back farther and farther away from home and from a chance to reunite with their families. There was now a sense of hopelessness and despair. The dream of marching to Delhi had been shattered.

Sustaining Morale

Bose had tremendous reserves of resilience. He soon regained his composure and tried to rouse the flagging spirits of his shaken men. "This is only a temporary setback. We lost this battle because of the bad weather. The monsoons snatched the fruits of our victory", he rationalised to his men.

The War for Indian Liberation was not over. He told his officers, "The Independence of India would be an outcome that was autonomous. It was not linked to the outcome of the Second World War. Whoever lost or won the war, India", he said, "would be free." In hindsight, his words were prophetic.

In talks with his officers he was realistic and never sounded delusional about the prospects of the war. He told his officers frankly that an offensive was no longer a possibility, but the struggle must continue. The struggle *per se* would serve to rouse the slumbering spirit of the Indian people and make them rise against their colonial masters. The problem was how would the Indian people get to know? War time censorship was very strict in India itself and Indian citizens were not permitted to hear the broadcasts of Netaji, neither from Berlin nor from Tokyo. After the war, The British had solved this problem by their triumphalist gesture of putting on trial the INA officers and going to town on this issue to humiliate the Indians as a people.

For his officers, Bose had examined the course of the war. It had gone through three phases, he felt. The first phase was marked by spectacular German and Japanese successes. In the Second Phase, initiative had passed to the Allies and the tide had flown the other way. He felt a third phase was approaching when the Axis Powers, pushed back to the borders of their homelands had begun to hit back. It is noteworthy that around this time, the Germans had launched the famous counter-offensive in the Battle of the Bulge (in the Ardennes). The Japanese had launched the much wider Ichi-Go counter offensive in South Central China, an offensive that had overrun half a dozen provinces and knocked out the airfields that the Ledo Road was supposed to support. This major counter offensive had put paid to the American plans of helping the Chinese push forward to their coastal areas and provide them air bases to hit the Japanese home islands. The strategic direction via China seemed to have collapsed with the Ichi-Go offensive. It is possible that at that time, Bose's outlook was unduly coloured by the immediate events of that period and there always was an element of wish-fulfillment in such analyses. He also had to sustain the morale of his officers and men, and this meant he had to conjure up avenues of hope somehow.

The Ichi-Go offensive in China seems to have closed all strategic options of any move towards Japan from the Chinese mainland. The Americans now had no option but to do island hopping in the Pacific. This was working much better and the US B-29 bombers were now attacking the Japanese cities from the Pacific islands. Bose was an incorrigible optimist. He saw glimmers of hope that the Axis Powers may yet turn the tide of battle. The Allies had far greater material resources. However, it was not material power that will decide this conflict, he said, but spiritual force. In this, Bose felt the Allies were definitely weaker. Psychologists talk these days of Emotional

Quotient (EQ) as opposed to Intelligence Quotient (IQ). Bose displayed a very high level of Emotional Quotient. He just would not accept defeat. He would simply pick up the pieces after every successive disaster, devise fresh plans and soldier on with redoubled enthusiasm and zeal. This can only come from tremendous reserves of spiritual strength.

Disillusionment

In the immediate aftermath of Imphal, there was a great deal of bitterness against the Japanese in the INA rank and file. Many INA officers felt they had not trusted them enough to give them a meaningful combat role. Logistics had been a very major let down. Most officers resented the failure of the Hikari Kikan to help the INA Forces with logistical support and specifically medical support. Bose now insisted with the Japanese that like friendly nations they appoint an Ambassador to the Azad Hind Provisional Government. This Japanese Embassy would be better suited to liaise with the Arzi Hakumat at an appropriate level. The Indian officers and men were stung by some Japanese officers trying to belittle their combat performance. They demanded that the INA Forces not be parcelled out to various Japanese divisions in supporting roles, but be allowed to fight like a cohesive Allied entity and allocated a separate sector/ sectors, where they could prove their mettle in a stand alone mode. Bose even offered that the INA would take on many of the logistical functions where the Hikari Kikan had dismally failed the Indian Force. The Japanese pointed out to the fact that the paucity of resources had equally affected their forces and they could only share the poverty on the battlefield. However, they readily agreed to most of Bose's demands.

The Imphal disaster had taken its toll in Tokyo too. Gen. Tojo, the Japanese Prime Minister, who was so favourably inclined towards Netaji, had resigned (though not for reasons related to the Imphal setback). Tojo'successor was anxious to meet the Indian leader. Bose accordingly flew to Tokyo with Gen. Chatterji, Col. Habibur Rehman and Gen. Zaman Kiani. He was welcomed in Tokyo by the Foreign Minister, Shige Mitsu. He also experienced the ongoing raids by the American B-29 bombers. Bose pressed for better relations between partners. The Hikari Kikan had been a disappointment and its powers should be reduced, he said. At the highest level, Nippon and the Arzi Hakumat e Azad Hind should treat each other in the manner usual between two sovereign powers, through properly

accredited Ambassadors. The Japanese supply dumps, he hoped would continue to furnish staples like rice and dal (pulses), for the many other things that his men needed, however, the Azad Hind Fauj's own 'Q' Branch would make itself responsible helped by a monthly rupee subsidy by the Japanese. Only military liaison should remain with the Kikan. Even here, Netaji's expectation was that Indian and Japanese battalions placed side by side would communicate directly through interpreters.

The Japanese accepted almost all these demands. By December 1944, they had appointed an envoy to the Provisional Government of Azad Hind. The Japanese envoy reached Rangoon without proper ambassadorial credentials and Bose refused to receive him! So much for the people who felt that the INA were lackeys of Japan!

His speeches to the Indian diaspora became more trenchant and shrill. '*Khoon! Khoon! Khoon!*' (Blood-Blood-Blood) he shouted, "Give me Blood and I will give you Freedom!" People asked him that they did not have the arms, the numbers and strength to invade India again. What then should they do?

His answer was that they should anticipate the Indian Freedom by paying the price of freedom right where they were in Burma with their bodies and their blood. "For freedom", he said, "carries a price." The price of freedom is the *observed willingness of men to fight and die for it.*

Move up of 2nd INA Division

The First INA Division had virtually been written off by disease and death. Three of its regiments had been badly decimated. The British Military Intelligence estimates had placed the INA casualties at 7,000 – 9,000 men for this phase of fighting. Those badly wounded had died. Only the lightly wounded ones had made it back. Troops had been famished by starvation and struck by the jungle diseases like Malaria, Cholera, Dysentery, Diarrhoea, Typhus and snake, scorpion and poison fly bites.

The Second INA Division was now moved up to take the place of and supplement the badly decimated First INA Division. Only its 4th Regiment had remained uncommitted as a reserve in Mandalay. It was now merged with the newly raised 2nd INA Division.

- The Subhash or First Brigade was badly decimated and was billeted at Channgu.

- The Gandhi Brigade (which had been reduced to just one battalion) had been stationed at Mandalay.
- In November 1944, all three Brigades (Regiments) of the First INA division were ordered to move to Pyinmana, some 50 miles below Mandalay on the main railroad and line to Rangoon.
- The Fourth Brigade had been in reserve at Mandalay. It was now moved South to Myingyan, where the Chindwin joins the Irrawaddy. It had a large proportion of Tamil indentured labour recruited from Malaya. They hardly knew the Hindustani language and the so called martial-class instructors of the former British Indian Army, looked upon them with disdain. This had led to a flare up and deterioration of relations between the men and almost resulted in a mutiny. Finally Col. Dhillon was sent to take charge of this regiment and whip it back into shape. He had been serving earlier with the 5th Guerilla Regiment but had violent arguments with his immediate boss and had to be transferred. Dhillon was hot headed and impetuous.

The 1st Infantry Regiment was the best equipped Field Force Brigade that was armed with Battalion mortars, artillery guns and Armoured Fighting Vehicles (AFVs). People thought it would be the first regiment to be sent to Burma. However, the Japanese could not spare the transport for its heavy equipment and it was retained by Bose in Malaya to form a core of the 2nd INA Division, largely because the Second contained so many locally recruited civilians and it could not be ready when the First was.The First Infantry Regiment was now moved on the overland route and sent its heavy weapons by ship. Tragically, the ship carrying these was torpedoed and sunk. This was a major loss. The Regiment had reached Rangoon in September but had now to be re-equipped before it could be sent farther.

Dhillon had meanwhile taken charge of the 4th Regiment and was whipping it into shape. The Tamil indentured labour had mutinied as the British Indian Army instructors tended to treat them with disdain and there were language problems. Morale was low. To avoid air attacks, they hardly wore their uniforms and rarely drilled or trained. Dhillon changed all that brusquely but was “firm, fair and friendly” in his approach. There was a dramatic turnaround in morale and effectiveness.

Col. Prem Sahgal, who was Military Secretary to Netaji, meanwhile, had also asked for being given the command of an active formation. He was given command of the Fifth Regiment. The First Subhash Regiment which had been decimated in the Battle of Imphal was now merged with it and it was renamed as the 2nd Infantry Regiment. Prem had influence at the HQ and ensured that heavy weapons like machineguns, mortars and field telephones were supplied to it. Half the men in Prem's Regiment were not former Indian Army men, but indentured Tamil labour from Malaya. It was a genuine experiment therefore in raising All India All Class units, with races classed non-martial by the British. His Second-in-Command, Maj. Prem Negi was also an Indian Commissioned Officer (ICO) like Sahgal.

Meanwhile, Bose spoke again to the INA officers and told them about Japan's new strategy. This he said was to withdraw to a circle, a carefully prepared and fortified circle, which the British and Americans would not be able to breach. The edge of this circle passed through Burma. It ran along the Irrawaddy River, its new defence line, and the INA had been tasked to defend it.

The Irrawaddy Line

In fact, the INA, as per its demand, had been given an independent sector on the Irrawaddy River line to defend. This lay between the Japanese 15th and 28th Armies that were guarding the new Japanese defence line in Burma. Lt. Gen. Kimura Hyotaro had taken charge from Lt. Gen. Kawabe as the head of the Burma Area Army. Both Gen. Kawabe and the luckless Lt. Gen. Mutaguchi had been relieved of their commands and sent home in disgrace. Because of their rigidity, inflexibility and intransigence they had largely been responsible for the debacle in the Imphal Campaign.

As stated, the INA's Second Division had now been given independent charge of a sector of the Irrawaddy defence lines that stretched from Pagan to Nyaungu on the river front. It was held by the 4th Brigade (of some 1,500 men) under Col. Dhillon. In depth, this sector stretched to the massif of Mount Popa, an extinct volcanic crater that loomed up from the dry surrounding landscape like an oasis of Green. This was held by the INA 2nd Division HQ and Prem Sahgal's 2nd Infantry Regiment. As luck would have it, the British very deliberately chose this INA held sector to attempt a breakthrough. Unlike in Imphal, the INA was now in the eye of the storm.

British Offensive Plans

Peter Ward Fay writes that in the aftermath of Imphal, for a while, the Japanese had considered abandoning Burma altogether. However, this moment of weakness passed. With great difficulty men and material were rushed in to make up for the huge losses. Japan had now decided to hold Burma on the line of the Irrawaddy. The Japanese Burma Area Army HQ had anticipated that the main British attack would come in the area of Mandalay. It had disposed its forces accordingly to meet such an attack. Field Marshal Slim apparently had other ideas. The availability of Japanese force to space ratio in Burma was low and without air superiority the defenders would not be able "to look deep and strike deep." It was rather difficult to defend a vast country of this size and with such difficult terrain that facilitated infiltration and bypassing.

Initially Britain had not wished to retake Burma by overland assault. With Lord Mountbatten as the overall Commander South East Asia Command (SEAC), his preference was to mount an amphibious assault directed more at Singapore and beyond. British Forces had been sent into Northern Burma only because of American pressure. The Americans wanted to open the Ledo Road to supply Chang Kaishek's Chinese Army in South Central China. They hoped to strengthen them adequately to push the Japanese back to the coastline of China. This would have enabled them to secure airbases to mount attacks on the Japanese islands and possibly mount an amphibious invasion from this strategic direction. The British launched Wingate's highly ambitious Second Chindits Operation to facilitate operations against the two Japanese Divisions deployed against Stilwell's Chinese forces in North Burma. This proved to be a damp squib. The Americans had made it plain that unless North Burma was tackled they would provide no transport and landing craft for the amphibious operation.

Finally, North Burma was cleared and the Ledo Road opened. The first convoy left on January 12, 1945 and rolled into Kunming on February 04. This road however was soon rendered meaningless. The tonnages it could take were pathetically low. In fact, the total tonnage trucked for the six months (before the end of fighting) amounted to less than one month's air supply along the Hump Air route. In the meantime, the Japanese launched the massive Ichi-Go counter offensive in China and knocked the bottom out of all American military plans in China. The American B-29 bombers would

never reach Tokyo now from the Chinese airfields (as the Japanese Army had overrun them). They could however do so from the Pacific islands.

This brought about a paradigm shift in American plans. China's usefulness in the war against Japan was not at all, what it had once promised to be. Gen. Joe Stilwell was relieved of his command and recalled to the United States. Stilwell was very senior and influential. He had withering contempt for the British military capabilities. He was nicknamed "Vinegar Joe" due to his difficult temperament. Joe had a very poor opinion of the British Army. In military matters, he felt, they seemed to live in a world of make-believe where men always did their best, nobody floundered and defeat was treated with as much nobility as victory. Stilwell could discover nothing noble in Burma's loss in 1942.The Allies had taken a hell of a licking there (that was the language he used). What they had to do now was pick themselves up, go back and hand the Japanese some of the same. Any signs of reluctance, he took for gutlessness, the sort of gutlessness that had brought Singapore to premature surrender. "Like many Americans", Peter Fay says, "Stilwell believed that Gen. Percival's defence of Malaya did not bear comparison with McArthur's defence of the Philippines." The Americans had a sneaking suspicion. Was it possible that *the British wanted to let the Americans do all the fighting in the war against Japan*? The Empire had turned soft or perhaps it was being inordinately clever in manipulating its allies.

Till 1942, the British were the dominant partners in the alliance. The disastrous string of defeats in Malaya, Singapore and Burma in 1942 changed all that. By 1943, Britain had passed the peak of her capacity to mobilise men and resources. America's thriving military-industrial complex however had just come up. When the Allied Conferences took place between Roosevelt, Churchill and their staffs, to hammer out strategy and plans, there was a perceptible shift of weight and influence between the two partners.

The British were desperately short of landing crafts. They had never produced cargo or transport aircrafts and were totally dependent on the Americans for the Dakotas. Churchill was anxious to avoid a land campaign in South East Asia. This implied increasing the size of the British Indian Army beyond the 2.5 million strong it already was and this was to have its own inexorable logic. To buy time with the Americans, the British had launched the Second Chindits Operation. In actual terms this had invited

the strong Japanese counter offensive in Imphal-Kohima that almost threw the British out of North East India.

The establishment of ground contact with China now, no longer drove relations between Britain and US, writes Peter Fay. The British therefore, for a time, reverted to their original strategy to do nothing in Burma. They may have originally decided to wait till the war in the Europe was over to shift the full weight of resources to the war against Japan. The Germans however had counter-attacked and delayed the whole process in the Ardennes. The operations against Japan however were moving faster than anyone had foreseen. Britain could now send forces to fight alongside the Americans but they would scarcely be noticed.

Churchill was very much worried of the political consequences. If everywhere East of Calcutta, Great Britain was seen playing second fiddle to the Americans, it would be disastrous for Britain's image as an Imperial Power. If she wished to re-establish her empire in South-East Asia, she had to erase the burning shame of her defeats (nay routs) at the hands of the Japanese, an Asiatic power. This would happen only when British Forces were able to overcome Japanese Armies at least somewhere, alone and unassisted. Burma was the only such likely place. Only the British had an Army there (the Americans did not). The British Army had just met the Japanese attack and was able to hold it. In Burma, a convincing and independent British victory seemed possible. In fact, Burma seemed to be the only place in the whole of Asia, where it did seem possible. Even Mountbatten came to the conclusion that a victorious campaign in Burma, though leading nowhere (Burma was a dead end), was worth the effort.

Field Marshal Slim's Military Plans

Slim was instructed to press on to the Chindwin. He needed no prodding. He and his 14th Army were keen to avenge their shame and humiliation of 1942. Slim planned to catch the Japanese Army in the Shewbo plains, west of the Irrawaddy, using his tanks and airpower to destroy their formations. Gen. Kawabe's successor Gen. Kimura Hyotaro clearly saw through this trap. Wisely, he declined to fight where he was at a disadvantage and withdrew across the Irrawaddy River. The obvious route to Rangoon ran through Mandalay down the East side of Burma's Central Valley. However, this would have taken a long time. This was how, Kimura intended to fight and

Slim would have to fight through the Japanese divisions. This would delay them till the monsoons intervened and stopped all operations or slowed them to a crawl. Beyond July 1945, they would possibly cease to move at all. Slim thought hard. He looked for a manoeuvre that would place his force along the Japanese line of retreat and force a major or decisive battle well short of Rangoon, where he could bring to bear his superiority in armour, artillery and above all airpower. Such a defeat of the main Japanese force would enable a rapid advance down the main highway to Rangoon. This is precisely what the Japanese had done in Malaya.

British Operational Design

The 15th Army had two corps, the IV Corps ad 33 Corps.

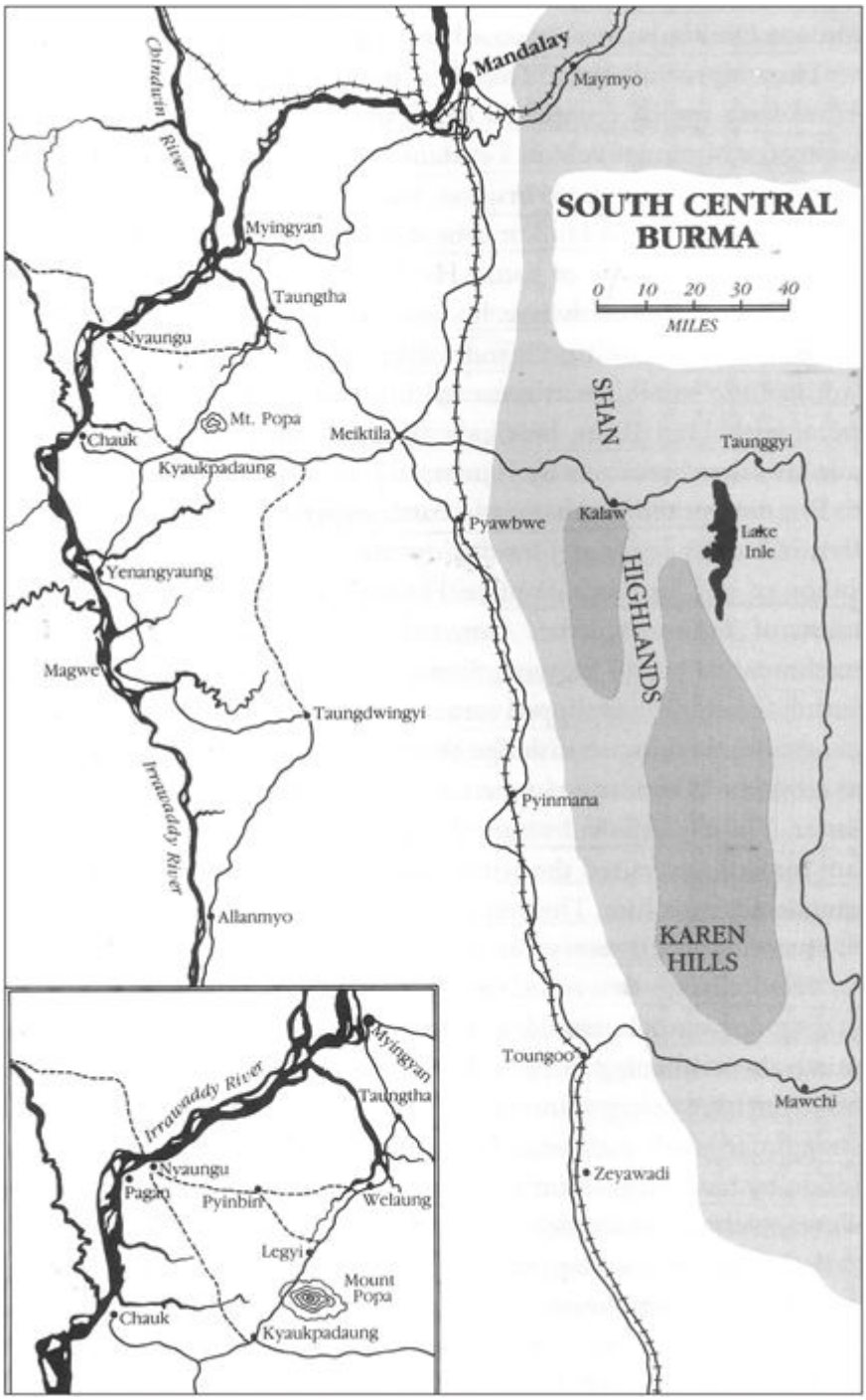
- **33 Corps:-** This corps comprised the 19th and 20th Indian Divisions and the 2nd British Division. This was tasked to follow the Japanese across the Irrawaddy and press them hard to give an impression that they were headed for Mandalay. The 19th division was to make a bridgehead 40 miles North of Mandalay and before end of March reached the outskirts of the town. The Japanese garrison held out till March 20, 1945. One brigade moved to capture Maymyo. The 20th Indian and 2nd British divisions crossed the Irrawaddy below Mandalay and moved South and East playing havoc with Japanese lines of communication.
- **IV Corps:-** This comprised the 7th and 17th Indian divisions and a tank brigade. Frank Messervey's IV Corps (Messervy had led a division in the Imphal campaign) would slip South through the hills West of the Central Valley, cross the Irrawaddy below Myingyan and make a dash for Mektila with his 17th Indian Division, an Armoured Brigade of Sherman tanks and Armoured Cars and Infantry in trucks and half tracks behind. There on the main rail line and highway, 20 miles below Mandalay, lay the main Japanese administrative area, the dumps depots and airfields. Mektila was the key to victory. Having secured it Messervy would then race for Rangoon, which was just 300 miles South, plunge straight down the highway and try and beat the Monsoons.

This was Field Marshal Vicount Slim's plan. Success hinged on airpower and air transport support to keep IV Corps going forward in its blitzkrieg to Mektila and later its dash to Rangoon. South East Asia Command would protest that it had no air transport resources, but Slim would present a *fiat accompli*. IV Corps just had to be kept going with fuel, ammunition and rations in its dash for Mektila and Rangoon. Mountbatten would have to get the air transport resources even if he had to beg the Americans for these.

Thus, Messervy's IV Corps had begun to move down about 200 miles, along a fair weather track past the Chindwin and ensured he was not discovered. The advance party met stiff resistance from the Japanese rear guards but total lack of air resources prevented them from picking up the huge columns that were trundling up in the rear. Messervy maintained total radio silence while a dummy HQ at Tamu transmitted misleading messages. The British fighters prevented the Japanese planes from picking up the clouds of Red dust caused by the move of vast columns.

The Battle of Nyaungu

In the campaign in Kohima-Imphal, the INA had been given a marginal role. The Japanese were not sure of its combat performance and they did not want to take the risk of discovering that in the midst of a critical and raging battle. In the second phase of the operations in Burma, however, destiny put the INA slap in the path of a major Allied offensive.



At Nyaungu, the Irrawaddy, which is otherwise more than a mile in width (and even more at other places), comes down to its narrowest stretch. That is why Messervy had chosen this stretch for an assault crossing of the Irrawaddy. There was perhaps the other reason. It lay at the junction of two Japanese Armies, the 15th and 28th Armies and it was held, as per Slim, by

the 2nd INA Division. Possibly, the British felt this was the weakest segment. They knew that the morale of the INA had suffered after the disastrous outcome of the Imphal and Kohima battles. They had expected massive surrenders and disintegration then but none had happened. Despite the frightful sufferings from disease and starvation, morale had held miraculously and decimated units retained their cohesion. After all these INA units were fighting to free their country. They were heading for home, to meet their long lost families. These in themselves were strong motivators for combat. They had been fired up by Netaji's patriotism and zeal. They were premised upon a militant-nationalist model for combat motivation, which had worked so very well for the Germans, Japanese as also the Red Army of the Soviet Union. The Red Army incidentally, did not fight for the defence of Communism but the straight forward defence of Mother Russia.

This motivational basis had now taken a huge knock. The INA were no longer advancing to free their country. They were retreating away from it with the Japanese Armies. With each mile that they fell back, they were getting farther away from their families and homes. It was a desperate and hopeless situation. Netaji exhorted them to fight on. Their sacrifices would help India become free he said. Many former Indian soldiers, weary and tired of non-stop fighting could not see the connection. The pull of the homeland is very strong. Earlier they were headed home. Every mile gained brought them closer to their home and families. The turned tide of the battle had suddenly reversed the situation. It was now driving them farther and farther away from their homes, with each passing day. To many desperate soldiers, the only way to ever get back home now was perhaps by surrendering to the advancing British. Overcoming this most human desire and making soldiers fight in these changed circumstances was a very challenging task. The INA First division had suffered terribly in the Imphal campaign. Would the INA still fight in the dramatically changed circumstances? The INA was able to fight with a fair amount of success, not simply due to the overall methodology of militant Nationalism, but even more so, in this hopeless phase, by the excellent tactical level leadership provided by three courageous and determined Indian Formation commanders, who led by their shining, personal example.

The British were doing their best to fan this "home-coming" sentiment. They had been showering propaganda pamphlets and surrender passes from the air to ensure this outcome. A massive psychological warfare campaign

had been launched. The Indian population in Burma, Malaya and the rest of South East Asia were greatly demoralised by the Imphal debacle and worried about the British retribution after re-conquest. Financial contributions to the INA cause had become difficult, recruits were harder to come by. The British were sure that this time, at long last, the INA would surrender in droves. It would completely crumble and break down on the Irrawaddy. The official British History of this theatre states, "The defence of the Pagan-Nyaungu area had been left mainly to the INA." In his personal memoirs, Slim identifies the unit as the 2nd INA Division, with numbers reported between 5,000-10,000. In fact, on the riverfront, we had only Col. Dhillon's 4th Regiment of some 1,500 men. This had the 7th, 8th and 9th Battalions with 400 and 500 men each. They also had three Light Mortars and eight machineguns. Of these only four were operational, but they were effective. Towards the rear of the Irrawaddy River, was the Mount Popa redoubt. This was the core of the INA 2nd Division's defence. The HQ of the 2nd INA Division under Maj. Gen. Shah Nawaz Khan and the 2nd Regiment under Col. Prem Sahgal were to be deployed here. It was a formidable position, as it had ample stocks of water and could not be overrun by the enemy tanks.

To the intense surprise of the British, the INA did not disintegrate at the first sight of Slim's Army. It did not tumble over itself in its eagerness to surrender. Instead, it fought back tenaciously in places and in some cases foot infantry beat back the determined assaults by Sherman tanks (as in the Battle of Mt Popa). It was another miracle. The miracle this time was that of competent, tactical level leadership provided by three brave and motivated Indian officers–Maj. Gen. Shah Nawaz Khan, Col. Dhillon and Col. Prem Sahgal. No wonder, the British were so infuriated by this trio that they wanted to hang them. After the war, it was these three who were put on trial at the Red Fort.

Tactical Leadership

There were three tiers of tactical leadership in the INA. These were the former British Indian Army officers of three types. The King's Commissioned Officers (KCOs) were Sandhurst trained and regarded as the crème de la crème. Then there were the Indian Commissioned Officers (ICOs) trained at the Indian Military Academy (IMA) Dehradun. There were only about 20 odd KCOs and ICOs in the INA. They held the top

leadership positions. Some of them were good by any global standards. Zaman Kiani and Shah Nawaz Khan, both of whom became Major Generals in the INA (Zaman Kiani was promoted to Major General on February 04, 1945 and Shah Nawaz Khan a few days later) had been Sword of Honour winners at the IMA, right on top of their batches. Kiani had also won the Gold Medal for academic and service subjects and it showed in his writings. The weakest link in the entire leadership chain were the VCOs (Viceroy Commissioned Officers). These were the JCO (Junior Commissioned Officers) ranks, an institution peculiar to the Indian Army. They were there at the platoon and company level as junior level commanders and advisors to the British officers, as a bridge almost for translating the orders and instructions of the younger white officers and helping them navigate the ethnic terrain in terms of customs and traditions of the Indian troops. They were promoted from the rank and file, were middle aged and towards the fag end of their military career spans and therefore physically not as fit as the younger officers and men. They had grown up children and additional family responsibilities that come with age. They therefore tended to be cautious. They lacked education and thus were severely handicapped in command above company levels. Yet many of them had to be promoted to the rank of Battalion commanders in the INA and sometimes, especially in very demanding situations, proved to be a weak link.

In terms of providing motivation and sustaining morale in a highly adverse and hopeless situation, they had a most onerous task cut out for them. The situation was hopeless. They could now only fight for their *Izzat* and honour as professional Indian soldiers. No amount of political indoctrination would now suffice. Cols. Prem Sahgal and Dhillon were brutally frank with their men. "Look, if you have a yellow streak, get lost don't hang around here. I'm going to fight and I need men of honour who will fight well. If you can't, please go now. Get lost. But you must make your choice now and not once the battle is joined."That is what they told their men with brutal frankness. The Indian soldier well understands this concept of honour and steadfastness in times of grave crisis. Most of the men just nodded grimly and stayed on.

The three officers were tough as nail professionals, now in the middle of a fight. They were fighting for their *Izzat*– their personal honour as officers and gentlemen, till as long as they humanly could. They were hard driving and inspirational leaders in combat. They kept a cool head, moved about

fearlessly on the battlefield and always reached the point of maximum danger to take personal charge. They were ideal battle leaders and professional warriors. That diehard warrior temperament showed so clearly through all their actions. Their actions, in fact, spoke far louder than their words. Here were three of India's best native field commanders of the Second World War. In the true sense, they deserved its highest post-independence gallantry award–the Param Vir Chakra (PVC). What they got instead was the trial at the Red Fort. The British wanted to hang them as traitors and make a show of it to insult Indians.

"Why did the Indian soldiers of the INA not surrender in droves?" the British had asked themselves. Because these three officers had threatened to shoot them! That was the sage conclusion they had arrived at. The trio had actually shot four men who tried to desert by casting their arms shamefully in the face of the enemy! In any regular army, this is a crime punishable by death. Here were three professional soldiers who would not countenance cowardice in the face of the enemy. They were rock solid in battle themselves and just would not let their men break down on the battlefield. It was a matter of *Izzat*. As Philip Mason said it was a "matter of Honour".

Subsequently, they faced a public trial as war criminals for waging war against the King Emperor. The British had won the war and could now let the INA secret out of its wartime closet. They could crow over how they had whipped the upstart natives who had dared to take up arms against the empire and waged war against the King, Emperor. "Of course we waged war against the King," they said. "He is not our King. India is, and will be a free country", they deposed under oath. "Traitors", screamed the pro-British Press. There was a wave of intense anger in the whole country as the news of their exploits tumbled out of the wartime closet. As Netaji had said, "the news of the terrible sacrifice would be sufficient to arouse and inflame the Indian people." They were inflamed indeed. "Patriots, not traitors "the people shouted back. Then what the British feared the most happened. The Indian Armed Forces rose in angry revolt in 1946. It was all over for the Raj! Sunset had come in less than one year after they had won the Second World War. Netaji had been proved absolutely right. With that as an essential backdrop, let us now study in detail about the conduct of the INA operations in this phase of the war in Burma. One of the best and most authentic accounts of this phase is found in Peter Ward Fays' "The Forgotten Army: India's Armed Struggle for Independence 1942-1945."

Assault Crossing at Nyaungu

The 7th Indian Division of Slims IV Corps, reached the Irrawaddy river. The INA's 4th (Nehru) Regiment under Col. Dhillon was deployed here. Directly facing the main assault echelons of the British Indian Division was Hari Ram's 7th Battalion with just some 400 men. Four miles down the river was Chander Bhan's 9th Battalion with 500 men. The third battalion (the 8th) was behind the river-line, in depth, as a reserve. The Regiment had three light mortars with just 20 rounds per mortar. As stated, it had four machine guns. They had been issued 8, but these were not all functional. Dhillon had cannibalised the parts to make four fully functional. On a strong hunch about where the landings would occur, he had given all 4 machine guns to Hari Ram's battalion where the river was at its narrowest. (This hunch would prove to be spot on). On the whole however, the INA regiment was hopelessly outnumbered and completely outgunned. Dhillon admits that the men were nervous. They wouldn't be human if they were not. Many of them were fresh Tamil Indian recruits from Malaya who had never seen action before.

To ensure surprise, the British artillery had not registered targets and held its fire. A number of the boats were damaged in transit and had to be repaired. Thus, the British could commence their assault river crossing only in the morning. The British South Lancashire Regiment commenced the crossing in its assault boats The river current was so strong that the boats had to move diagonally from upstream. It was, as Slim boasted, "the longest opposed river crossing attempted in any theatre of the Second World War". Col. Dhillon had rushed to Hari Ram's battalion. A seasoned veteran, he told the nervous soldiers to hold their fire till they could see the whites of the enemy eyes. The machine guns and mortars opened up in a devastating burst of fire. They raked the assault boats. Many boats were hit and had gaping holes. A number of others capsized. There was utter shock and confusion all around. The British had been expecting white flags and tame surrenders. Instead they were shell shocked by the hail of withering fire. Dhillon rushed forward and he saw overturned and drifting boats and the balance of boats rowing back for all they were worth to safety. A great cheer went up from the nervous men. They had made mincemeat of the first wave of the British assault. The battle seemed won in the 7th Battalion's area.

Remnants of that first assault wave were rushing back in full and undignified flight. Dhillon received news that another assault crossing was being attempted downstream in Pagan. This was actually a diversionary crossing by a Sikh Battalion of the 7th British Indian Division. Dhillon then had no means of knowing that it was a ruse. So he rushed there. This assault was also blocked and beaten back by Chander Bhan's well-aimed volleys of rifle fire. The men had waited till the enemy got close. They then opened fire in a devastating burst that riddled the leading wave. The enemy turned back in a hurry and motored back to the home bank of the Irrawaddy. This assault crossing was also over.

Round One had gone to the INA. Dhillon received news of yet another crossing being attempted further to the East. Some South Lancashire Regiments' men had slipped across the river during the night and the Japanese were trying to dislodge them. The impetuous Dhillon again rushed there and got caught in the crossfire and was pinned down for a long time. Dhillon wanted to influence the battle personally by his presence. Actually, even though he was following the combat prescription of the field commander rushing to the point of action and maximum danger, in hindsight, he should have never left Hari Ram's 7th Battalion area. Commanders get decorated for moving around fearlessly under fire and moving to the spot of action. Dhillon had done just that, perhaps, because he thought erroneously, that they had won the battle in Nyangu and beaten back the British attack. He had not catered for what followed next. He had tragically not thought about the British repeating the assault on the 7th Battalion frontage, the narrowest point on the Irrawaddy. The British now brought in their 25 Pounder Guns and began a fearsome pounding of Hari Ram and his boys. A withering barrage of artillery fire pinned them to the ground. The British now brought forward their Brigade of Sherman Tanks. The whine of tank engines could be heard across the river. The tanks manoeuvred into position and began to engage Hari Ram and his men with pinpoint and deadly accuracy. The 7th Battalion area had become a cauldron of deadly fire. Artillery and tank shells were exploding all around. They were also being raked by the machine gun fire from the tanks. Hari Ram could hear the screams of the wounded and the dying.

Then he heard another ominous sound. Swarms of fighter aircrafts were now diving on to his position, raking them with canon fire and dropping bombs that mushroomed all over. It was one of the most intense

bombardments ever seen in Burma. The defenders had been located and were so completely pinned down and destroyed by a barrage of artillery and tank fire, as also the Allied aircrafts swooping overhead. The INA boys had no artillery support whatsoever. They could not engage the enemy tanks and guns that were so clearly visible, spitting death from the far bank. Their mortar ammunition was almost over. It had been used to destroy the first wave of the assault.

Just then they saw the second wave of assault boats stream out from the other bank of the river. Several companies of a Punjab Battalion of the British Indian Army were now closing in under the cover of an intense curtain of fire. The British had taken heavy casualties in the initial wave of the assault because they knew that the defenders were the INA and possibly they expected the Indians to just stand up with white flags and surrender. Had they received some such assurance through their agents? Dhillon unfortunately was not with the 7th Battalion now. He was pinned down in the crossfire to the East. Hari Ram apparently had been a Viceroy Commissioned Officer (VCO). He and his men were truly dazed by the fierce fire assault by the artillery and tanks and then by scores of Allied fighter aircrafts. They were now desperately short of ammunition. Soldiers have to be battle inoculated to withstand intense artillery bombardments and very accurate tank fire. In this case it was compounded by equally fierce air attacks. It was hopeless. Hari Ram saw Indian soldiers coming in this attack, not white troops. There was the faint hope that Indian troops would treat them better. Resignedly, he decided to surrender. About 100 men near him also surrendered. The rest 300 were either killed or wounded and those who survived now tried to escape towards the depth battalion (the 9th).

Meanwhile, Col. Dhillon had extricated himself from the East and rushed to the reserve battalion at Tetthe. Panic stricken survivors from the fierce bombardment ahead had run there with the terrifying news of the slaughter that had taken place ahead and of the tanks, guns and aeroplanes lined against them. Dhillon was enraged. He ordered the battalion to get up then and there and counter attack the bridgehead. The men were shaken. The weaker ones said, “Sir, what will you gain by getting us killed? For God’s sake let us surrender. This is hopeless.” Some battle-hardened NCOs suggested that it may be better to fight from prepared positions where they were. They had no artillery and the counter attack by day in open terrain had no hope in hell of success. Actually they were right.

The chances of evicting the Punjabis who had firmed in by now, were zero. Dhillon was shaken. Distraught and feverish, he prayed fervently. He says he saw a vision, a glorious image of the Tenth Guru, Guru Govind Singh with the Golden Crest on his turban. He is the founding Guru of the Sikh military brotherhood. Dhillon shivered from head to foot. Then he felt a surge of courage passing through his veins. A jawan got up in panic and tied a white cloth to a stick. Dhillon bellowed in rage. He got up, pushed the man and snatched the flag of shame from his hand. He trampled it under his feet and shouted, "We are men! We fight here!"

His awestruck men obeyed. They beat back the probing parties and patrols that were coming. There was an assault that followed. They held their fire and then opened up from close. "See the whites of their eyes", he shouted. Mortar rounds began to fall on their position even as he pushed the men into cover. Then it all fell silent and still. The silence of the battlefield, the uncertainty gnaws at the nerves of the toughest men. At night they heard the growl of tank engines. Possibly the British had brought in some tanks on assault rafts. They had absolutely no anti-tank weapons and no artillery support. As a military professional, Dhillon knew they had no way to survive in this position if it was to be assaulted by tanks. So at night, like a good tactician, he broke contact and withdrew with his men to the INA Redoubt in Mount Popa. Here his men were safe from enemy tanks and from here they could put up a damn good fight.

The Battle of Mount Popa

Meanwhile, Col. Prem Sahgal had also moved up to Mount Popa. He had left Rangoon on February 13, 1945 and met the staff officers at HQ 28 Army located near Prome. They had briefed him regarding the overall battle situation. He moved up to Yenanyuang, some 50 miles below the Nyaungu bridgehead. He met Col. Yamamoto Tsunoru, the man who had led the Yamamoto column in Imphal. He was now commanding the Japanese 72 Independent Mixed Brigade (IMB). He also directed a smaller force called the Kanjo Force, a much smaller composite force of two battalions (Kanjo Butai as the Japanese called it). Yamamoto said the Kanjo Force would work in close concert with Col. Sahgal's 2nd INA Regiment. This was a very professional move. Prem Sahgal had personally liaised with the Japanese formations in his area of operations. He had liaised with the staff of the 28th

Army to get into picture about the overall battle situation. In a situation where signal communications were poor to non-existent, this was an excellent step and paid good dividends. Prem asked for an independent sector where his men could show what they were made of. The Japanese agreed. The Indians had learnt their lessons well. He was told his role was to defend the Mount Popa Redoubt. Prem reached Mount Popa on February 18. His regiment was still moving in. Maj. Gen. Shah Nawaz and the Divisional HQ of the 2nd INA Division also built up on Mount Popa. Netaji had heard of this redoubt where the INA was going to make its stand. He wanted to see his units. Slowly a desperate scheme was forming in his mind. Mount Popa was a formidable position. He felt he should move there and make a desperate last stand against the British. If he was martyred, may be his death would inspire his countrymen to rise in revolt. Otherwise the situation was turning hopeless.

He had moved up from Rangoon along with Mehboob, a Japanese Liaison Officer (LO) and some men for escort. Gen. Shah Nawaz met him at Pyinmana, where the remnants of the first INA Division were recuperating. They were still in a bad shape and so it was decided to let them recoup. Bose had asked Shah Nawaz to take charge of the 2nd INA Division at Mount Popa. To get to Mount Popa they had to pass through Mektila. As the party approached the town, they heard that the British Forces had crossed the Irrawaddy, scattered Dhillon's 7th Regiment and were now headed on their way to Mount Popa.

Bose was keen to get to Mount Popa immediately. His officers were horrified. He risked being cut off, killed and captured. The Indian Freedom Movement could not risk this. Bose was adamant. He was now desperate. It struck him that the only thing that could possibly galvanise the Indian people now could perhaps be the news of his death in action. He was almost hoping that he would die with a Tommy Gun in his hand. He refused to go back to Rangoon.Shah Nawaz was furious, "You are proposing to risk your life", he said "just to show your personal courage: but this is selfishness and you have no right to do it; your life is not your own, it is a precious trust for India, held in our keeping, we are responsible"

"Don't worry about me", he returned lightly, "England has not made a bomb that can kill me" he retorted. His officers kept delaying him deliberately by dragging the argument out, so that insufficient hours of darkness would be left for him to get to Popa. They kept delaying his move

deliberately. Bose lost his temper. The car is not ready they said. And so it was now near dawn. There was no option but to call off Boses' move to Popa.

Breakout to Mektila

Meanwhile, as described earlier, the 7th Indian Division had established the bridgehead in the Pagan-Nyaungu area. The 17th Division of British Indian Army now entered the bridgehead along with a Brigade of Sherman tanks and Armoured Cars leading, followed by Infantry in half tracks and trucks. A column of tanks and infantry had broken out for Mektila in a headlong dash expecting to be supplied and even reinforced from the air. It was tasked to clear Mount Popa and then rush South-East down to Myingyan-Mektila Road. This was good move and the Japanese had nothing to throw in the tank's way. In sheer desperation, they laced the ground in their path with ditches and infantry men with 250 lb bombs hid themselves in these. They were to let the tanks cross over them and smash the bombs, fuse upwards to the tank bellies. Even this desperate tactic failed to work as these men were mostly unarmed and the British infantry simply shot them. When Bose and his party had met at Mektila, the British tanks were just 20 miles away at Mahling. When the Japanese LO came with this information, Bose was adamant. He should have gone to Mount Popa, he said. Gen. Shahnawaz was horrified. Twenty miles is hardly any distance for a column of tanks. They could burst here anytime. While they were arguing, news was received that the Kayukpadaung road had been cut. This made Mount Popa unapproachable from that side.

He had no right to risk himself like this, his staff insisted. His officers then virtually pushed him into a staff car and forced him to leave. Bose's party left fully armed, not sure if the British columns or road blocks would intercept them on the way. Bose's physician sat by his side. The Japanese LO travelled on the side-board of the staff car with his Tommy gun ready. Bose had a Tommy gun in his lap and was as excited as a schoolboy at the prospect of action. Near Yindaw, low flying Allied fighter aircraft swooped down on them, forcing them to get into the bush and take cover. Bose next stopped at Pyinmina, where the remnants of the First INA Division were staying. From them he selected a regiment worth, who were somewhat fit and formed it into a new X Brigade. He wanted to move forward him leading , in a famous last charge of the INA as it were, wherein he could die

a martyrs death and thereby fire up his people. In those days Bose was getting a bit desperate. The larger war had been lost and he knew it. The only hope that remained was that the sheer scale of their sacrifice and tenacity would inspire their countrymen to rise against the British. Bose felt that his death in battle at that juncture could perhaps serve to provide just the inspiration that his countrymen needed. So here he was like a Samurai-choosing death over life-trying to take as much risk as possible. Paradoxically, it is our experience, that in the battle field, such fearless men do not die. Those who go looking for death live, those who fear death die that is the way of the Samurai. With great difficulty Shahnawaz dissuaded him from what he felt was uncalled for heroics and forced him to head back to Rangoon to resume the leadership role of the freedom struggle and not get involved in its tactical battles. Shahnawaz himself now left for Mount Popa to take charge of his new command. Shah Nawaz and Mehboob now drove on to Mount Popa. They had to lead the battle there. Bose had sent bottles of whiskey for his former Military Secretary Col. Prem Sahgal to cheer him up a bit!

Desertion

When Gen. Shahnawaz reached his HQ he got the dismal news that five staff officers from the Divisional HQ had escaped with the intention of surrendering to the British. This was bad news indeed. The British now would have up to date intelligence about their defensive layout from these traitors. "Swines," Prem had muttered under his breath. However, most of the INA officers took it in their stride and Shahnawaz in fact, simply arranged for replacements. Bose however, was shattered by this news. He actually went into a depression. He had not expected this sort of treachery from his officers. These five were not in combat or under any pressure on the battlefield like Hari Ram. They had not even been attacked. This seemed a pre-planned and conscious decision induced by the British propaganda leaflets and surrender passes being showered daily by the British planes. This would truly lower the prestige of the INA. Bose sulked for a whole week and refused to meet anyone. Then he had his men assembled and harangued them for hours. Then he asked the units to have a competition to stage plays and songs and derogatory poems denigrating these traitors, burning their statues and effigies. As a political solution to a military problem of morale, it was somewhat amusing to the professionals but it did serve to raise morale

in the garrison and for some time created an interesting diversion. Possibly in some ways it worked by shaming people who may have been thinking on those lines. Face matters a great deal to Orientals. The military fact however remains that with the major defeat in Imphal, the military situation had been transformed radically. No longer was the INA marching to free its own country. It had been forced to retreat and with each mile, its former Indian Army soldiers were getting pushed further and further away from their homes and families. It was a hopeless situation and the entire motivational context stood altered and stood on its head. The correct military method now was an appeal to personal and unit honour and izzat. The trio of Gen. Shahnawaz, Cols. Prem Sahghal and Dhillon had taken the right military approach from direct personal example. They had been brutally frank and honest with their men. There was no hope in hell, but nevertheless, they would fight to the bitter end. They were duty bound to do so. It was a straight forward matter of personal honour. If any of their men did not feel upto it, they should say so now and leave. Once they join the battle, no desertions would be accepted. In fact desertions in the face of the enemy are punishable by death in all armies. It was their personal example and steadfastness that saved the day for the INA and inspired them to fight till the bitter end.The British knew of their hopeless situation and had been expecting them to surrender in droves.Yet to their utter amazement, even in that hopeless situation, the INA units had fought with an amazing degree of tenacity and determination. No wonder the British were so very incensed against these three brave officers and were desperate to hang them after the war. This in turn raised the question of legality. This was a duly established government in exile (recognised by 9 nations) and which had formally declared war against Great Britain. It was a legally constituted National army set up to free a nation. The colonial army of exploitation was the one that was illegal! Certainly this brave trio of commanders had waged war against the King Emperor. They were duty bound to do so. The Azad Hind Government in exile had declared war against him!

The Battle Of Mektila and Mt Popa. (Japanese Counter Attack)

The British 17th Indian Divison and an armoured Brigade had broken out of the Nyaungu Bridge head on the Irrawady River and made a headlong dash for Meiktila. Meanwhile 33 Corps formations were breaking out of the

Bridgeheads to the North and on its way to Manadaly. While 33 Corps had broken out for Manadaly, IV Corps had broken out for Mektila. IV Corps had really raced ahead without bothering to secure a land line of communications because it hoped to be supplied entirely by air. The new Japanese Commanding General in Burma, Lt. Gen. Kimura however saw a great opportunity to cut off and destroy the 17th Division Group that had raced ahead to Mektila and was on a limbo right now. The Japanese 72nd IMB and the Kanjo Butai (The battalion Force) under the well known Yamamoto of Imphal fame, was deployed behind the 17th Division. Gen. Kimura now tasked the IMB to move towards North on both banks of the Irrawaddy River and cut off the British Bridegehead they had established in the Nyaungu-Pagan area after evicting Dhillons 4th INA Brigade. He next looked at the area through which the British lines of communication passed. He tasked the Kanjo Butai Force and the INA deployed at Mount Popa, to mount operations against the British land lines of communication and choke them off. Once again, *destiny had placed the INA contingent in the path of a significant and critical operation.*

Gen. Kimura now put a garrison at Myingyan, near the confluence of the Irrawaddy and Chindwin rivers, to prevent the British from sending supplies downstream by river craft. He then started constituting whatever battalions and brigades he could muster to launch them in incessant attacks against the Mektila garrison. Once this was reduced/captured, Slim would have no forces left to dash off for Rangoon and reach there before the Monsoons. Once again, The 17th Indian Division that was surrounded formed an Admin Box supplied entirely by the air and hunkered down to face off the Japanese counterattacks. The problem was that Gen. Kimura's forces were scattered virtually all over Burma. He had to move them and assemble them for the attack on Mektila in a situation where British air superiority forced all Japanese movement to be confined to the night. This greatly slowed down the pace of the buildup. Kimura grew impatient and started launching the attacks in piecemeal. His chief objective was the airfield at the eastern edge of the town of Mektila. Had the British lost this air field, the British Force would have been confined to supplies only by para drops. With an armoured Brigade with this division, this may have been rather precarious. For four weeks right through March 1945, the Japanese kept up a stream of incessant attacks that shook the defenders but could not dislodge them. Messervy's

men clung desperately to the Town and airfield. It was Imphal and Kohima all over again. For a time the Japanese put the airfield out of use by shelling it with their guns and mortars. However its incessant attacks failed to overrun Mektila.

The Mount Popa Battle

Meanwhile Dhillons 4th Brigade (the Nehru Brigade) had fallen back to Mount Popa after the bridge head battles on the Irrawaddy river line. By then it had just 700 men left, (the rest had been killed, wounded or otherwise permitted by Dhillon to escape as they did not have the heart in this fight and desperately wanted to go home). Prem's 2nd INA Brigade was just trickling in to Mount Popa. To hide from the British how thin their defences were on the Mount Popa complex, Prem and Dhillon began intensive patrolling and laying ambushes and launching raids in the area around this Redoubt. In one such ambush, Prem's men surprised a British detachment and captured two jeeps and a radio set. The British detachment had abandoned them and fled under a hail of INA fire. The jeeps were very useful for Prem and his GOC, Gen. Shannawaz and helped them to move about and coordinate operations around Mount Popa with their Japanese Allies of the Kanjo Butai Force. The British later accused these three senior INA officers of sentencing to death four would be deserters and executing them by firing squads. Prem said that the sentences had been remitted and they were just trying to restore order and discipline and stiffen up resistance. As per Military Law, they were fully justified in shooting men who shamefully cast away their arms in the face of the enemy and tried to surrender. The fact is that the excellent and determined tactical leadership provided by these three officers (One Musilim, one Hindu and the other a Sikh) had *delayed British operations in this critical sector by well over two months.*

Once Prems 2nd Brigade trickled in fully to Mount Popa, they expanded its perimeter. Dhillon's Brigade now moved down from the hill and took up defences at Kayakpadaung to give depth to the defence of this Redoubt and dominate a larger area around to prevent movement of Briitish supplies and reinforcements. They now resorted to the guerilla tactics of seek out and destroy or only hit and run to interfere with the British lines of supply and communication. This would force the British to attack Mount Popa, a course

of action they were quite keen to avoid. The INA fighting patrols ranged some 15-20 miles outside the Popa position. They would move from water point to water point. They would ambush British columns. The British were now moving about in columns protected by Light tanks, armoured cars and infantry in trucks. One of Dhillon's Companies some what rashly tried to directly attack one of these British columns with Molotov cocktails etc, and took major casualties in this unequal fighting as they had no anti-tank weapons and artillery support. It was a daring action but given the fact that they had no anti-tank weapons, quite dangerous. Prem however, focused more on attacking isolated enemy infantry posts. There was one at Setsetyo. This they attacked in concert with a Japanese company. The British withdrew but one of their patrols was ambushed by the INA boys and the British suffered some 8-10 killed for the loss of just one killed and one INA soldier missing. Such actions served to boost morale and enhance the confidence of the boys. In tactical level skirmishes they were now getting the better of their former masters. Logistically they were comfortable at the Mount Popa position, as water and fruits were available in plenty. This was a far cry from what had happened to the First INA Division in the battle of Imphal. This stalemate lasted for well over a month. Then surprisingly, there were another set of desertions. Four men this time tried to escape and surrender to the British. Prem as Officiating GOC in the temporary absence of Gen. Shahnawaz sentenced them to death. Apparently the execution was supervised by Dhillon. This was a battlefield and they were fully justified in doing so. This was one of the major charges against these three officers in the Red Fort trials. The British were most keen to find an excuse to hang them.

Prem was now to lead a major two battalion sized raid on a British position at Pyinbin. The attack was to be launched in concert with the Kanjo Butai Force that had artillery support. Enroute Prem's little convoy of two jeeps was ambushed. However they quickly counterattacked and recovered these vehicles. Surprise seems to have been compromised and the attack was therefore, postponed. The next morning One of Prem's companies and a Japanes company were attacked by a major British Force. The British were apparently getting stung by these frequent raids and ambushes. By dusk that day British aircraft swooped in and destroyed the Japanese Forces few artillery guns. Fire support lost, this major attack on Pyinbin had now to be called off. Prem was surprised by the sudden increase in the levels of British activity around Mount Popa. Prem's hunch had been correct, the British

were now about to launch a major attack in this sector. The Indo-Japanese plans had worked. They had been able to disrupt British lines of communication to an extent that the British were now forced to mount an attack on the formidable Mount Popa position, something the British were very keen to avoid so far because of its inherent strength and defence potential. The whole trick was to pose such a level of threat to their lines of communication that the British were finally forced to attack the INA redoubt.

Meanwhile major fighting had taken place between Yamamoto's 72nd IMB and the British 7th Division holding the Bridge head at Nayungu. After heavy fighting the IMB failed to dislodge them completely. The Japanese made some gains at Myingin. The main assaults that were repeatedly launched at Mektila however failed to recapture either the town or the airfield. Kimura struck repeatedly but failed to reduce the British positions. The Fighting witnessed sea–saw battle till the fourth week of March 1945. For some time no British aircraft could land or take off from the Mektila Air field due to the Japanese shelling. This caused very anxious moments at the 14th Army HQ of Slim. Thereafter heavy airstikes were launched and the British were able to restore the position. Finally on March 28 the Japanese called off their attacks on Mektila. Slims 4th Corps (comprising of the 5th, 17th and 19th Divisons) now resumed its advance. The 17th and 5th divison were to lead this advance as they leap frogged ahead. 33 Corps was now to follow the course of the Irrawaddy River but now on the west side of the valley even as IV corps advanced along its east bank.

Operations of 5th Brigade, 2nd British Division

There were many scattered Japanese units left behind in their rear. These were the units that had repeatedly thrown themselves against Mektila.The Japanese and INA units in the Mount Popa area had continually been harassing the British lines of communications. These had to be secured and such continued vulnerability of British supplies could not be endured for long. Slim decided to comb this area by a series of strong columns moving diagonally across this area in a kind of a Union Jack manoeuvre to sanitise this region. The 5th Brigade of the 2nd British Divison was given the task. The British division was about to leave Burma. Given the logistical difficulties that formation had to be shifted before the rains began because

they consumed far greater tonnages than the Indian Divisions. There was also a rising clamour within Britain to bring the boys home now that the war seemed to be winding up. Home sickness and war- weariness was on the rise even in the victorious British formations. The INA boys were not alone in this war-weariness and the desire to get back home to one's kith and kin was there with all forces involved. The 4th and 6th Brigade of this British division were tasked to carry out sweeps along the Irrawaddy river bend. The 5th Brigade of this division, however, was given the far tougher assignment of making a diagonal thrust down the Tungtha–Kayukpadaung Road. It was a faulty decision to advance along a road axis that brushed past Mount Popa, a strong defensive position and difficult terrain where the Japanese-INA Forces had a clear advantage.

The advance of the British 5th Brigade was led by the Reconnaissance Regiment. (It was this regiment which had ambushed Prem Sehgal a few days earlier). Behind this came the main body of the Brigade in trucks and half tracks. These were led by a Squadron of Carabinier Medium Battle Tanks. After the Brigade main body was a Regiment of 25 Pounder guns (the 10th Field Regiment). The RAFs Hurricanes and Thunderbolts were providing air support to this formidable force.

Prem's company, which had gone out earlier for the attack, had taken position ahead of the main defences of Mount Popa in the village of Legyi. This place had very hard ground where troops in trenches could withstand heavy shelling. Prem now deployed his entire 1st Battalion in this village. The low hills around gave excellent observation and fields of fire. From here Prem could easily observe the advance and build up of the enemy and readjust his defences well in time to face the attack. In addition to this screen deployed ahead of his main defence, the Japanese had deployed a patrol in a concealed position some six miles ahead of his defences at Hill 1395. This provided excellent information about the move of British Forces via radio to the Kano Butai Force HQrs. From there it was relayed by Field telephone to Prem. Prem had taken the trouble to liaise with them in detail and establish a good rapport with the Japanese Force Commander. This was to pay handsome dividends. He therefore had some inkling of what was happening long before anything came in sight. Legyi is five miles from the summit of Mount Popa. From the Legyi village, the ground slopes up gently all the way to the Popa peak in a series of tangled spurs and gullies. These make the

movement of vehicles extremely difficult even for tanks. In the instant case the British made it worse by handling their tanks rather timidly. Prem had managed a company of mortars to support his regiment. However he used them sparingly for he had only limited ammunition. The basic framework of his defence was provided by Medium and Light Machine guns which he used very effectively. Against the tanks he had very little or no anti-tank weapons, not even land mines. However, here the terrain came to his rescue and made it very difficult for the enemy to use tanks.

Conduct of Mt Popa Battle

The enemy began his attack with a heavy preparatory bombardment and machine gun fire. This was so heavy that it disrupted the INA supplies. Then the Japanese patrol at 1395 reported that it had observed trucks carrying stores and men moving forward, accompanied by tanks and armoured cars. Prem immediately sent out two patrols to tag this force. One patrol vanished. Perhaps it had been ambushed. Shelling and straffing by aircrafts started. They raked the post with machinegun fire and dropped bombs. A number of British patrols now tried to probe his positions but he drove them off by fairly accurate machine gun fire. On the Third day, after contact, the British started sporadic attacks. His battalion commander, a former VCO (JCO) panicked. Prem moved up to steady his nerves. These were more in the nature of British probing attacks and Prem was able to beat them back eaisily. One British attack from his right flank however, broke through to his rear to his cook house. Prem launched immediate counterattacks and evicted the British before they could firm in. He brought in a company from the Third battalion and cleared all areas towards his rear by swift and energetic counter attacks. By next morning all his defences were absolutely clear. The massive British attack had been decisively beaten back. A British brigade supported by tanks and artillery had been beaten back by the Legyi Battalion with the support of just one company from the depth battalion. It was a superb defensive action against far superior forces, of which any professional Army could be proud of. Prem's battalion, sans any artillery or air support, had beaten back a British regular army brigade, well supported by tanks, fire support and massive levels of air support. Yet the INA boys had remained rock steady and in a fluid and fast moving battle, launched swift and determined counter attacks to throw out all British penetrations of the defences. Simply put the British brigade size attack on the outer defences of

Mount Popa had totally failed. Prem had good reason for tremendous satisfaction as he sent a detailed report on the Battle of Mount Popa to the INA HQ.

This report was intercepted by the British after the war and used as evidence to try and hang Prem for the ferocity with which he had fought the forces of the King Emperor. The battle of Mount Popa was a battle that not just the INA but India as a nation could be very proud of. Our men had beaten not just the British Indian Army but the regular units of the British Army itself. This battle had also given clear indications of the general climate of war-weariness that was spreading across most armies in the last months of the Second World War. There was intense pressure from back home on Field Marshal Slim to pull out the British Divisions and leave the rest of the fighting and dying to the natives. The attack by the British troops themselves on Mount Popa, was most half hearted and not pressed home vigorously. The rag tag men of the INA Brigade (with not a shred of artillery or air support) had beaten them off decisively because of competent tactical leadership at the local level.

However, what this attack did highlight was the climate of extreme war-weariness, exhaustion and home-sickness that had become so rampant and wide-spread in the last months of the war. Most civilized people were at the end of their tether. Most soldiers just wanted this infernal war to end and get home to their families and children. This war weariness was most evident and visible in the British Army. In the INA, it was the VCO ranks and older soldiers of the Indian Army that seemed to be cracking up. Even though this engagement with a British Brigade had been decisively won, the mortar officer (an old JCO) deserted the same night. This seemed to open the flood gates as it were and a number of VCOs led their men to try and surrender and hopefully earn their tickets back home and to their families. In sheer disgust, Prem found his battalion ranks severely depleted the next morning and had no option but to withdraw from Legyi. He thought over the matter deeply. These men were not really cowards. They had fought bravely under actual attack. It is just that by now they were most pessimistic about the final outcome of this war. After years of endless fighting, they seemed tired and now wanted above all to somehow get back home. The psychological damage took place not in the spells of fighting when the men had something to do but in the lulls, when fear and uncertainty seemed to grip the men and the darkness added to their despondency and foreboding. The surrender

leaflets were certainly now beginning to affect the former Indian Army veterans and exploiting their desire to get back to home and family. They did not affect the civilian recruits from Malaya so much, whose homes lay elsewhere in the exact opposite direction. A Japanese battalion now came and replaced the battalion at Legyi. Prem fell back to Mount Popa and reorganised his three depleted battalions. He now reorganised them into two units. The British attacks commenced. By April 08, 1945 the Japanese line had broken down in this sector and a general withdrawal was ordered from this area. A Japanese Laison officer came and informed Gen. Shahnawaz of this decision. Accordingly Shanawaz issued the necessary orders on April 10. That day the INA Field hospital at Kaukpadaung was bombed by British aircraft and some 48 INA men were killed and 30 wounded. Attacking a hospital was flagrant violation of the Geneva conventions. The next day a general retreat started. The INA columns now were using Bullock carts and even these could move only by night. The Allied columns on the other hand were moving by roads in trucks and were likely to cut off their line of retreat. The only option was that the Japanese throw up a roadblock somewhere and slow down these road bound Allied columns. This the Japanese did at Paybwe a little below Mektila. Three skeleton Japanese divisions put up a fierce fight and delayed the Allied advance by a few days. However by April 11 this resistance too had crumbled. By that time Shahawaz and his two regiments were withdrawing from Mount Popa.

Gen. Messervey now began his dash for Rangoon. They had three weeks to cover 300 miles. The vehicles stirred up great clouds of yellow dust as Field Marshal Slim positioned himself on the road to watch IV Corps commence its breakthrough to Rangoon. Standing with him was the novelist John Masters (of Bugles and a Tiger and Road Past Mandaly fame). He was then GSO-1 of 19 Division and he wrote rhapsodically about the Indian Army. “Twenty races, a dozen religions, a score languages. When my great-grandfather came to India, there had been as many nations. Now there was one!”He went on lyrically, “I only know that I saw besides the road outside Pyawbwe, what *we* had made. Where once there had been twenty races, a dozen religions, a score languages he now saw one Indian Army, the Nation Incarnate.” Masters was absolutely right in one respect. The British Indian Army had grown to a record size of 2.5 million men during World War Two. It was the largest all volunteer army in the history of the world. The very creation of such large armies and national institutions, spurs the creation of

a nation state. It served to re-create a pan- Indian identity. All the divisions that fought in Slims 14th Army and in North Africa and Italy and later in France, Low Countries and Germany were called "Indian Divisions". Unwittingly but surely, the British had revived the very idea of India by creating such mammoth pan-Indian institutions and armed forces. At the end of World War Two, the British legions were tired and just keen to get back home. The British Field Marshals and Generals were keen to get them out of harm's way and rely instead on the rock solid Divisons of the British Indian Army. As Slim had clearly admitted, these divisions consumed less tonnages and they fought better than the British. An amazing situation had occurred by the end of the war, the senior commanders much rather preferred to have Indian divisions rather than British Australian or South African formations. The Indians were proving far more reliable and steady in combat. Their tolerance of combat stress was phenomenally high. It was this clear realization that forced the British to leave India just two years after the end of this war. Their British troops were exhausted and the mercenary Indian soldiers that they were so proud of, no longer wanted to be their slaves in perpetuity. The even more critical factor was that at the end of that war, only three races were still in full fighting vim, the Americans, Russians and surprisingly the Indians. In Burma it was Indians on both sides who were doing most of the fighting and heavy lifting. The British had created a vast Indian army of about 15,000 indigenous officers and about 2.5 million men. Bose in turn had raised an INA of 1500 officers and some 50,000-60,000 men. These men had engaged in some tough and unrelenting combat for several years on end now. The British Senior commanders were now preferring the Indian divisions to their own, when it came to tough fighting. The simple fact is that the Indian Divisions of the British Indian Army had performed better than their British, Australian or Canadian counterparts. At 2.5 million men this simply was the largest all volunteer army in the world. It was a fearsome instrument. That is why after the war, the British were in a tearing hurry to demobilise it, first to save economic costs and secondly to ensure they left behind an absolutely tooth less India under a self confessed pacific government of Pandit Nehru that was far more interested in peace rhetoric and posturing than building up a strong nation-state. In fact immediately after Independence (or at least what passed for it initially), Nehru told the First Chief of Independent India's Army that he just did not need an Army! The police Forces would suffice for him. Nehru went out of

the way to emasculate and marginalise the Indian Armed forces and starved them of resources. He wanted a nation that was not based on hard power but the soft power of pacificism, *Ahimsa, non-violence* and *satyagraha*. This had led subsequently to the disaster of 1962, the humiliating debacle at the hands of the Chinese PLA. That fortunately was a very timely wake up call that awoke India to the harsh realities of the Westphalian state system it had joined. However we have moved far ahead in time.

In April, 1945 however, there were two Indian Armies fighting each other in Burma. The people of the INA who claimed to be the real Indian Army, were sadly now forced to move from village to village. In the darkness and confusion, Bagri's battalion had separated from Prem. They were attacked by British tanks, armoured cars and infantry. They demanded that they surrender. A Gurkha Havildar from Bagri's battalion scribbled a note "Gentlemen- I do not come." Then he fought to the last man last round and died, desperately trying to beat off tanks with rifle bayonets and grenades. In great sadness, Prem retreated to Natmauk.

Peter Ward Fay poignantly describes the end of Prem's war. On April 26, 1945, Prem's men had a clash with a Gurkha battalion. They took shelter in a village and soon British planes began to circle overhead. The Burmese villagers came to him and said. "If you fight they will bomb our village and set fire to our houses. Kindly don't fight."Prem sighed wearily. He looked at the old men with white hair, the ladies with babes in their arms. Silently he agreed to surrender. He did not want these poor Burmese civilians killed for the sake of his personal honour. Banta Singh was sent under a white flag. A Gurkha CO, Lt. Col. Kitson came over to accept the surrender. "I have no rations to give you", he said. Prem was moved in a jeep to the HQ of 20 Division. His escort handed him over to a British Major. The Major was poring over a cross word puzzle in the Times of India. He asked Prem to sit down. Then he said, "I say old chap, do you know anything about these things?

"Not much", Prem said, "but Ill try." Prem moved closer and they sat together under the tree doing the cross word puzzle.

The war ended on that note for Col. Prem Sahgal of the INA.

Post script. There is an interesting post script however. On April, 29 1945 , Prem was taken to one of the Brigade HQs of the 20th Indian Division, then located at Allanmayo. While Prem was talking with the Brigade Commannder, the GOC of 20th Division, Maj. Gen. Gracey walked

in. He looked at Prem up and down and said – "So we've caught you. Why didn't you come over sooner? You had plenty of time. You fought us at Popa, you fought us here, you fought us there, why didn't you come over sooner?"

Prem tried to protest that he hadn't come over he had been captured in battle.

Gracy did not listen. He continued in his peeved tone. "What did you mean you people, by going on fighting? We had armour, artillery, you chaps had nothing. But instead of surrendering you fought. It was madness. Why did you do it? Why didn't you come over?"

"Of course it was madness" Prem replied. "A revolutionary army lives on the spirit of madness."

That is the most befitting epitaph to the INA of Subhash Chandra Bose.

Bose wanted to continue to stay on in Burma and plan for the day that they would be able to stage another invasion of India. His initial plans were to stay on and wage guerilla warfare against the advancing British forces in Burma. For this he needed the support and cooperation of Aung San and his BNA. This whole plan went awry when the Burmese National Army (the BNA) suddenly did a complete volte face and joined the advancing British Forces. On March 17, 1945, Aung San had organised a parade of the eight BNA battalions in Rangoon. They had ostensibly marched out to join the Japanese forces at Mektila. Their actual purpose was to switch sides and commence guerilla warfare against the Japanese. A few days later, on March 27, to be precise, "Bandits in military uniforms", had reportedly attacked a Japanese post at Pegu, just 40 miles from Rangoon. The BNA and Aung san had for some time been in touch with the British through Force 136- an intelligence organisation led by Col. Mac Kenzie who was tasked to raise insurgent armed groups to wage guerilla warfare against the Japanese. Around May 14 Aung San had himself crossed the Irrawaddy river at Allanmyo, got into a plane provided by the British and flown straight to Field Marshal Slims HQ but not as a prisoner like Prem. He had switched side and become head of the Anti Fascist Organisation (AFO).These events had put paid to all of Netajis plans to wage guerilla warfare in Burma in concert with the BNA.

In fact Netaji had to leave Rangoon on April 24, 1945 for Bangkok. He had commenced the move in his staff car. Then he saw his men marching sadly along the road. A little ahead he saw the ladies of the Rani of Jhansi Regiment marching back with 20 kg Packs on their back. Moved, he left his

staff car and began marching on foot. It was a long and arduous march. Netajis feet had become badly blistered but he marched on to express his solidarity with his troops. The INA column finally reached Bangkok on May 14, 1945 after rather harrowing journey in which Bose had to personally intercede many times to get his troops some priority for getting across the bombed out ferries. He was mostly worried about the girls of the Rani Jhansi Regiment whom he felt were under his personal charge. The Japanese were rather irritated but in view of Bose's great prestige, they complied even in that chaotic situation. From here he flew to Singapore, where he would stay till middle of August 1945 when he left for Saigon, on what is said to be his last journey.

9

Missing in Action

"*I appeal to you to cherish the same optimism as myself and to believe like myself that the darkest hour always precedes the dawn. India shall be free and before long.*"

– *Subhas Chandra Bose*
Special Order of the Day to INA, April 24, 1945

"*The roads to Delhi are many and Delhi still remains our goal. There is no power on earth that can keep India enslaved. India shall be free and before long.*"

– *Subhas Chandra Bose*
Special Order of the Day to INA, August 15, 1945

The last days of Bose are shrouded in great mystery, wrapped up in an enigma. It is a mystery that endures to this day and simply defies resolution despite three Commissions of Inquiry instituted by the Government of India. Till today, there are a thousand ugly speculations and many theories and conjectures. What really happened to Bose? How did he simply disappear from the face of this earth? That is one of the most enduring mysteries of the Indian Freedom Struggle. He had single handedly taken on the might of an empire. Did that empire finally get back to him to take revenge and impose a fearful retribution? Worst of all did the nascent Indian state connive in engineering his end? The most widely known thesis,

trumpeted loudly till recently by the Government of India, (led by the Congress mostly), trenchantly wanted to force feed the air crash theory and foist it on the Indian people. Despite glaring flaws, why has this theory been so aggressively marketed by the Indian state?

Significantly, this air crash thesis was given strong credence by the two British Intelligence operatives who dealt with Bose, Hugh Toye and Gerard H. Corr. These were the men charged by the British Military Intelligence to draw up personality profiles of Bose and follow his every move. They studied the INA's organisation and structure and its operational moves and performance in painstaking details. In fact, two of the very objective accounts on Bose so far, are by these two British officers. They are coloured to an extent by the perspective of the *"enemy"*! Despite that, one can see a sneaking admiration for Bose even in these accounts by enemy intelligence operatives, tasked to create his personality profiles so that he could be hunted down, apprehended and possibly killed.

Despite their ingrained attitudinal slant, these are meticulous and detailed accounts that provide a wealth of details on the activities of Bose and on the INA. Their books constitute two of the best reference texts because they quote from official papers, Military Intelligence (MI) assessments and detailed Interrogation Report of INA prisoners, a valuable primary source of intelligence. One has to be careful however, to the extent that this remains an "enemy's perspective", and such perspectives do tend to be somewhat jaundiced. In the matter of Netaji's death and disappearance, they do seem to be trying to push an official narrative of sorts that British Intelligence (MI-5) would like to put out as the final epitaph of Bose.

For some incomprehensible reasons, the Nehruvian dispensation in India had rather visibly gone out of its way to promote the narrative of the MI-5, the deadliest enemies of Bose. Let us not forget that in March 1941, Churchill had ordered the Special Operations Executive (SOE) to *assassinate Bose*, when he was enroute to Germany. To the best of one's knowledge these orders were not rescinded once Bose reached Berlin safely. Purely from the point of view of motives, such an account by British intelligence operatives has to be treated with a degree of caution before we accept it as the gospel truth. It is important nevertheless to analyse the essentials of the British Intelligence perspective on the death of Bose. During wartime, these intelligence reports had perforce to be objective.(The actual operations had to be based on their veracity). The problem is their authenticity after the

operations were over, to be more specific, their conclusions about Bose's alleged death in an air crash were somewhat suspect. Were they trying to sell/ plant a motivated narrative?

Gerard H. Corr and Hugh Toye sum it up rather neatly in their accounts of the last days of Netaji. These accounts paint a picture of confusion, desperation and a great hurry to escape the clutches of the advancing British forces on Netajis part. There are no well thought out plans to escape and no evidence of any contingency planning for such a scenario in the British accounts. Is that entirely credible? The end was almost inevitable by end of 1944 and the writing was on the wall. In fact the final outcome of the war was evident after the defeat in the Battle of Imphal-Kohima itself. Bose was meticulous and painstaking. Would he and his immediate staff not have worked out any contingency plans? This seems entirely out of character with the personality we are trying to profile. Nevertheless, let us again examine the narrative of the British intelligence officers. Gerard Corr sums it up neatly in his book "The War of the Springing Tigers". He says:

> "Bose arrived in Moulmein on 01 May 1945 and moved on to Bangkok 11 days later. Here he met Field Marshal Count Terauchi. Terauchi told him that the Southern Army HQ was now moving to Saigon and invited Netaji to accompany him. But by now, Bose had in his mind making his way to the Soviet Union. *He had a vague, hopeless plan for transferring INA Units to Russia, where he then hoped to persuade the Russians to assist in the freedom struggle by invading from the North*. So he turned down Terauchi's offer and went on to Singapore. He was there on 16 August, when the news of Japan's surrender was announced. Netaji managed to get a flight to Saigon and he immediately hurried to Terauchi's HQ with a request to be flown to Russia. The Field Marshal cabled Tokyo for instructions and permission for the flight was refused.
> "However," says Corr,"*Terauchi must have taken pity on Bose*, for he ordered an aircraft to be made ready. He had never seen eye to eye with the Indian but he felt honour bound to give him a chance to escape from the Allies and a possible death sentence (later, Corr adds as an afterthought, the Tokyo government cabled its agreement for provision of the aircraft)." Corr continues, "A type 97-2 twin-engine Bomber (code named *"Sally"* by the Americans)

was trundled out from its bomb proofed shelter and made ready for a flight to Manchuria. The pilot selected was the Warrant Officer Ayogi, the co-pilot was Major Saburo Takizawa. Lieutenant Colonel Shiro Nonogaki was named the Captain of the aircraft. The plane was ready for take off late in the afternoon of 17 August 1945. There was a delay while some Indians who had heard of Bose's arrival, presented him with two strong boxes of presents (reportedly gold jewellery, ornaments, gold bars and cash to continue the Freedom Struggle). The crew was now concerned that the Sally was overloaded by an estimated metric ton, but they were weary of hanging about and reluctantly took the boxes on board. At 5 p.m, the aircraft roared down the runway and slowly climbed northwards."

Peter Ward Fay's "*The Forgotten Army*" is perhaps the best, most detailed and authentic account of the INA and its struggles. Fay says, "there were a total of 12 people on board the Mitsubishi aircraft" (page 382 of his magnum opus). Peter lists these as four crew, 6 Japanese (to include Lt. Gen. Shidei, the Deputy Chief of the Japanese Army in Manchuria, a Russian speaking officer tasked to negotiate the surrender of the Kwantung Army with the Soviets and who was to help Bose with his negotiations with the Russians). Besides the Japanese, there were just two Indians – Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose and Col. Habibur Rehman. Bose had wanted his core staff, Abid Hussein, S.A. Ayer, Col. Rehman and two others to accompany him, but there were only two seats available on that plane.

Gerard Corr continues his air crash narrative, "At 5 p.m the aircraft roared down the runway and climbed slowly northwards. Two hours later, the crew decided to land for the night at Tourane (later Da Nang, site of the famous battles during Vietnam War), a Japanese held airfield midway between Saigon and Hanoi. They were worried about the excess load and did not want to risk a night flight. (Tourane is around 90 minutes flying time from Saigon). The Sally left Tourane at 0500 hrs the following morning and landed at Taipei's Singshan (Taihoku) airfield at noon on 18 August. Here there was a stopover for two hours. While the plane took on fuel for the long flight from Taiwan (Fomasa) to Hsing King via Darien, the Japanese Army HQ in their puppet state of Manchuria."

"Besides being concerned about the loading and trim of the aircraft, the pilot was unhappy at the performance of the port engine. He had run it up a few times before satisfying himself that everything was alright. Engineers had examined its spark plugs but had failed to discover the reason for some excess vibration. The flight to Dairen was expected to take six hours and the crew were anxious to get started as they did not wish to land in the dark on a strange airfield. Three extra tanks of fuel were loaded into the fuselage."

"Shortly after 2 p.m., the Sally taxied out. It was dangerously overloaded with baggage and fuel, and besides its crew had thirteen passengers. They included General Shidei who, it is believed, was going to negotiate with the Russians in Machuria for the transfer of Bose to Soviet territory. It had lifted off safely at Saigon and Tourane, so the crew felt confident about the take-off from Taiwan. It used up three-quarters of the runway before lumbering into the air. Hardly had it done so than the port wing dipped. It hit the far end of the airstrip, ploughed on into a mud fence, broke in two, and burst into flames."

Corr continues, "The pilot was impaled on the control column and died after being pulled out. His co-pilot was also killed by a piece of the column penetrating his skull. One of the fuel tanks inside the fuselage broke loose and the point of the tank speared General Shidei to death."

"A second tank broke up in the crash and splashed fuel over Bose and when the aircraft exploded the fuel on his clothing caught fire. Within seconds he was a mass of flames. But he managed to jump from the blazing wreck with his aide, Habib-ur-Rahman Khan, who rolled Bose in the grass to put out the flames. An Army truck rushed Bose and other survivors to the Nanmon Military Hospital. On arrival Bose was found to be in a coma. He died a few hours later of third degree burns".

"His death", says Corr, "was announced to the world by the Japanese Domei News Agency on 23 August. His remains were cremated and flown to Tokyo on 7 September. Rama Murti, of the Tokyo Independence League Branch took charge of the remains, later handing them over to the Rev. Mochizuki, a priest at the Renkoji Temple in Suginamiku. On 14 September, a short memorial service was held for Netaji, whose last words on staggering a flaming torch from the bomber are said to have been, 'India will be free before long'."

This account is far too detailed. It was almost as if, it was by a personal eyewitness and seems to have been deliberately embellished to give it a ring

of authenticity. What were even worse however were the depositions of witnesses before the Shah Nawaz Commission of Inquiry and later the G.D. Khosla Commission of Inquiry held in India in 1956 and 1970 respectively. The statements of the witnesses are at amazing variance with one another's. Witnesses also changed their depositions substantially between what they said to the two Inquiry Commissions. Hugh Toye's book was published in 1959 (just after the Shah Nawaz Commission got over) and Corr's book was first published in 1975 (just after the Khosla Commission). Possibly, the intention was to influence or shape the discourse in India. Of the three Commissions of Inquiry, the only one that actually went to the alleged crash site, was the Justice Mukherjee Commission. Based on an analysis of the evidence presented before the three Commissions, a number of glaring loopholes emerge in the air crash thesis. These are listed below:-

- There are no records of an air crash on the Taihoku (Taipeh) airfield for the entire month of August 1945. The only record that exists is about a C-47 American transport aircraft that crashed in September 1945 with some 26 released US Prisoners of War on board. This crash occurred some 200 nautical miles away from the Taihoku air port, in the vicinity of Mt Trident in the Taitung area. Anuj Dhar later wrote to the Taiwanese government who informed him in writing that between August 14-October 25, 1945 there had been no air crash on or near the Taihoku airfield. The photographs presented to the Shah Nawaz Committee are fake and were not accepted by the Khosla Committee as evidence.
- There are no records of the cremation of Bose and the Japanese Gen. Shidei at Taipeh. The dates of Bose's cremation given by the Japanese and Col. Rehman do not tally. Based on the witness statements the dates are variously given as August 19, 20, 21, 22 or 23, 1945. The Japanese government gave the date of cremation as August 21, 1945 whereas Col. Rehman had given it as August 22, 1945.
- No local Japanese Commanders came to receive two such important dignitaries, one a senior General of the Imperial Japanese Army and the other, an allied statesman held in great respect by the senior Japanese leadership. No local commanders came for their funerals either. There are no records of the funeral or even death certificate for Gen. Shidei.

- The death certificate reportedly issued for Bose is actually of a Japanese soldier called Ichiro Okura who died of natural causes (heart attack).
- The height from which the aircraft fell have been variously given as 1500 feet, 1000 feet (Shahnawaz) and as low as 150-100 feet. The number of passengers is variously given as between 08-13. The most accepted figure is 12. Even from the lowest stated height of 100 feet, if the plane had nose-dived as stated not even one passenger could have had a chance of surviving. It may be noted that this aircraft had no seats and passengers sat on cushions placed on the floor, ie, they were not wearing seat belts. The speed of the aircraft has been estimated as between 150-200 miles per hour. That eight of the 12 passengers survived such a crash from a height of 100-1000 feet plus, is an incredulous statement.
- Eyewitness accounts diverge greatly. Some say the plane broke into two or three parts, others state it was intact and simply caught fire. The cause of the accident is stated to be the gross overloading of the aircraft. Japanese aeronautical experts however, state that 13 passengers with personal effects was normal loading for the K-21 Mitsubishi class of medium bombers. There are no records otherwise of its propeller getting wrenched off on take-off as described. In any case a twin engine aircraft is not a helicopter that it will fall like a stone if one of its two engines malfunctions. It could easily have glided to a forced landing on just one engine.
- There are similar discrepancies in the timings of the landings and take off and the duration of the halt at the Taihoku airfield. The time of landing varies between 1100 hrs to 1400 hrs and the time of halt varies from 30 minutes to two hours and 30 minutes. What was the planes final destination? Was it Tokyo as the first Inquiry Ccommission said or was it Dairen Manchuria? There is great variance in the depositions of the witnesses.
- Despite these glaring loopholes, the Indian government stuck with amazing tenacity to the air-crash hypothesis. When the Justice Mukherjee Commission trashed this preposterous thesis, the Government refused to accept this finding!

Note by Military Intelligence on Last Days of Subhash Bose, November 06, 1945

Overall the British accounts and the first two Commissions of Inquiry in India tried to portray a chaotic scene of panic and an impromptu and unplanned flight of Bose, a fugitive leader desperately trying to get a Japanese aircraft to escape capture by the advancing British forces. The whole effort is to subtly paint Bose in unflattering colours and chip away sumptuously at his charismatic persona. As per most reports, the Japanese held Bose in very high esteem. As per Justice Radha Binod Pal, (a courageous jurist of great eminence), when Bose's name was mentioned during the Japanese War Crimes trials in Tokyo, Gen. Tojo and other Senior Japanese commanders had stood up as a mark of respect for the Indian leader. It is learnt that Bose had been given a personal 12 seater aircraft for travel. (He was the Head of a State). He had in fact flown to Bangkok on his own plane on August 16. This rather desperate plea bargain for one or two seats scenario on an outgoing plane to Tokyo or Manchuria, does ring a bit untrue. The Japanese defeat after the end of the Second World War was hardly like the American flight from Saigon where staff had hung on to the skid boards of the last choppers to escape the Viet Cong. An official Note by the British Intelligence in South East Asia gives a far more realistic account of Bose's movements, plans and actions in the last few days. These suggest a much better planned and deliberate escape operation, perhaps with an inbuilt deception plan to provide cover to the escapee, who was now deliberately making an outreach to the Soviet Union to seek its help against the British. The contents of this intelligence document are summarised below:

- "In December 1944, Bose had suggested that it would be expedient for the Japanese to come to terms with Chiang Kaishek and seek friendship with Russia. He expected Russia to become hostile to the USA and Great Britain after defeat of Germany.
- Japan was doubtful if Bose could produce this tripartite alliance.
- Bose visited Tokyo in December 1944 for detailed consultations with the post-Tojo Japanese leadership. At that stage the Japanese had spoken of large scale counter attacks.

- In June 1945, while in Singapore, Bose had requested the Japanese to move his provisional government and a part of INA to Japan proper or China.
- Lt. Gen. Shidei, Vice Chief of Staff, Southern Army opposed this. He said that without Bose, the INA in Malaya and Siam would disintegrate and become an add-on embarrassment.
- In July 1945 Bose sought permission to enter USSR via Manchuria with few select followers. Bose was advised to proceed to Tokyo. Col. Yano, Chief of 2nd Section of Southern Army said that the decision to respect Bose's view did not mean that the Japanese government had requested or that the Russians had given willingness to accept Bose.
- The Japanese government was then approaching the Russians to sue for peace and may not have wanted any complications. However, as a fall back plan, Bose intended to give himself up to the Chinese or US Forces.(In no case would Bose surrender to the British).
- Another source said there was no need for the Japanese to ask Russians for Bose's entry because Bose would have gone to Manchuria, from where he thought he would be able to get in touch with the Russian forces and obtain necessary admission independently.
- Bose left Singapore on August 16, (In his own 12 seater aircraft?) He stopped at Bangkok. He arrived at Saigon at 1200 hrs on August 17.
- Lt. Gen. Isoda, (Head of the Hikari Kikan) had come from Bangkok to bid farewell to Bose and returned after 2-3 days. From Saigon, Bose actually travelled in a plane which was taking Lt. Gen. Shidei to Manchuria via Japan, where he had been posted after the surrender.
- After the accident at Taihoku on August 18, Bose and Habib-ur Rahman were admitted to the military hospital, where Bose died the same night.
- Rahman left for Tokyo (after recovery) on September 05, 1945 with the ashes of Bose.
- It is still difficult to state anything conclusively on the fate of Bose, but the belief that he is dead is getting stronger."

The British intelligence report cited above, clearly indicates that the British were well aware of Bose's plans to escape to Manchuria and the USSR. Apparently they had high level moles in his HQ who kept them well informed. This could be also due to technical intelligence that is the Allied ability to break the Japanese cipher codes and read classified Japanese communications. These escape and evasion plans of Bose therefore, were not last minute and impromptu actions but seem to have been discussed and refined with his allies over a period of time, as this vital document clearly indicates. The latest tranche of files on Bose declassified by the Indian Government in March 2016 cites a message from the military intelligence to Lord Mountbatten. This report states that when Bose was preparing to escape from Burma by plane, the Chinese intercepted a Japanese message asking him not to do so. Perhaps they apprehended British attempts to shoot down his plane. Bose later escaped via land route to Thailand.

The Iqbal Malhotra Thesis

Iqbal Malhotra, (in his article in the Open magazine) has pieced together a highly credible narrative about the last days of Bose. He has not fully cited his sources but researchers aware of the background of this episode will not fail to note the very high degree of plausibility of the hypothesis that he has put across. Details of this have already been provided in the Prologue chapter of this Book. However, salient aspects are being summarised below.

- Bose's escape to the USSR was planned and executed by the Kempeitai (the Japanese intelligence Agency that functioned as a combination of the German Gestapo and Abweher). It had both– Intelligence and Counter-Intelligence functions. By the end of World War-II, it had a strength of 36,000 and was the equivalent of NKVD. Prince Tsuneyoshi Takeda was the Supreme Chief of the Kempeitai in the Kwantung Army deployed in Manchuria. He was the first cousin of the Japanese Emperor Hirohito and hence carried considerable clout. In specific, this operation seems to have been supervised by him. The Kepeitai was also involved because it had a role in hiding/safekeeping the INA treasure. Malhotra says that Hugh Toye had estimated the value of the INA treasure at 18 billion US dollars at 1996 rates of exchange.
- For the transfer of Bose from South East Asia, the Kempeitai had sent one of its own aircraft, a K-21 Mitsubishi bomber modified for

induction/extraction of Japanese agents from behind enemy lines. After the surrender of Japan, Malhotra states that, no Japanese service aircraft were permitted to fly and the only aircraft that were still flying around were those of the Kempeitai.

- Taihoku was one of the naval outposts of the Kepeitai and was possibly given the task of executing the deception operation to cover up Bose's escape to Dairen, Manchuria. That is why perhaps, Col. Habibur Rehman was dropped there to spread the air crash legend, even as Bose and Gen. Sheidei flew on to Dairen.
- The most critical role in this entire extraction operation was that of Lt. Gen. Sheidei, the Russian speaking Deputy of the Japanese Kwantung Army in Manchuria, (who kept flitting between Field Marshal Terauchi's Southern Army HQ in Bangkok and Dairen in Manchuria). He had come to personally escort Bose from Saigon in the Kempeitai aircraft. He was tasked to reach out to the Russians and negotiate a surrender of the Japanese Army in Manchuria. He was also to assist Bose in his negotiations with and surrender to the Soviet forces.
- The British intelligence reports and other sources confirm Bose's outreach to the Russian Ambassador in Tokyo (Jacob Malik) on November 20, 1944 and the dispatch of an envoy called Kato Kachu (code name?) to the Soviet Government rear HQs in Omsk Siberia, in end 1944. Bose's letter to the Soviet Ambassador now stands confirmed and has been declassified from the KGB files. It had gone all the way up to Moscow, but Bose had received no reply. The Soviets were inordinately suspicious of "walk-ins." Apparently Bose's plan was to get to Omsk and join his Azad Hind Government's embassy located there. The latest set of files released by the Indian Government in March 2016 clearly state that the three radio broadcasts of Bose were recorded as the 31 meter band on December 26, 1945, January 1, 1946 and February 1946. So apparently Bose reached Omnsk in Siberia and commenced radio broadcasts. He was alive till February 1946 – when the trail goes blank.
- From here onwards there are two hypotheses. The British MI-5 tried a neat double cross to paint Bose as one of their own agents. The Russians knew Talwar, the man who had brought Bose to Kabul, to be a

double agent. That is why they were rather suspicious of Bose and did not grant him asylum in Moscow (though they let him pass through). In 1941, in his letter however, Bose had expressed gratitude for the "help extended by the Soviet Government when I left India in 1941". (What kind of help is not clear. Was Bose merely being polite?) Was the British double cross attempt designed to ensure that Bose got a rather hostile reception in Manchuria?"If so, did it succeed in its aim of sowing doubts and suspicion in the Soviet minds? This would have possibly led to Bose's banishment to some Gulag in Siberia, where given the weak condition of his health (resulting from repeated incarcerations in British prisons), he may well have died of the intense cold and hard labour.

The Worst Case Scenario

The second hypothesis is that the British MI-5 and 6 had signed two Agreements/Protocols for high level intelligence sharing and cooperation in covert operations with the NKVD of USSR. Intelligence Agencies of USSR and UK the NKVD and MI-6 and SOE had signed two secret intelligence cooperation agreements regarding cooperation in secret intelligence sharing and covert operations. As part of this, the British and American Intelligence agencies had shared top secret data from their code breaking machines about the Japanese and the German operational plans. The first Agreement had been signed in December 1941 in Moscow between NKVD and MI-6. The second protocol was signed between the two intelligence agencies on March 03, 1944 to coordinate global secret operations. This agreement had earlier been invoked by the British to try and prevent the escape of Bose from Berlin to the Far East by the air or land route over Russian territory. Did the British intelligence invoke these Intelligence sharing agreements once again in end 1945, this time to seek custody of or gain access to Bose in the Soviet prisons? If yes, it starkly opens up the possibility of the extended torture of Bose for information and even his possible elimination at the British behest. *It would have been most convenient for the British to seek to interrogate Bose in Soviet prisons and get him executed there, as it would avoid any repercussions or public outcry in India. The British did not at all want Bose back in India,* where there would certainly have been a massive outcry if any attempt was made to imprison him, try him and hang him there.

Hijacking the Japanese Deception Narrative

So the best solution perhaps, was to spread the canard that he had died in the air crash. That gave them the luxury of interrogating him at length and then quietly having him done away with. Would the Soviets have cooperated with the British in this? If so to what extent? In 1945 perhaps yes, because the two countries were still war time allies and the cold war was yet to begin. Bose was to them, a war criminal who had collaborated with Hitler and Tojo and in the inflamed immediate aftermath of that war, passions were still running high. The British Home Member in India, Sir F Mudio, had clearly stated it would be best to leave Bose where he was than try and get him back. So did the British invoke their intelligence sharing and covert action cooperation agreements with the Soviets to gain access to him in the Soviet prisons for detailed interrogation and subsequent elimination? This is the most horrifying of all conjectures, for it implies that Bose was extensively tortured and eliminated , as one chilling account indicates, by being strangled to death using a plastic bag (in cell No 45 in the Yakutsk prisoner of war camp in Siberia). To mask this criminal activity, the British simply hijacked the Japanese deception narrative and used it to spread the canard that Bose had died. This gave them all the time in the world they needed, to interrogate (read torture) him and then safely do away with him. So in the end were the British able to torture and punish Bose severely for daring to challenge the military might of the Raj? Or were they able to prevail upon the Soviet Union to do this for them? It is a most depressing thought, but one that cannot be ruled out in our quest for the truth, however sordid or horrible it is.

The Ultimate Treachery

Does this sordid trail of betrayal and treachery end here or are there further shocks in store for the Indian people? The INA trials had begun in Delhi, in the iconic Red Fort in November 1945. Driven by public fury and outrage at this British gesture of triumphalism and spite, the Congress was forced to form a Legal Defence Committee to defend the three INA heroes on trial. The British wanted to give this public trial maximum media exposure to fill the Indians with revulsion against the so called misdeeds of these group of “turncoats and upstarts” who had dared to challenge the military might of the Raj. The entire secret of the INA now came tumbling out of the wartime

closet. The British themselves, in their rather misplaced gesture of triumphalism, gave it blistering publicity in the print and radio media. The secret that had been so well kept during the war, was now out in the open via screaming newspaper headlines. It sounded the death knell of the British Empire, exactly as Netaji had said it would. The knowledge of the INA had at long last reached the people of India and it caused them to rise in anger. The Defence Committee consisted of legal luminaries like Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, K.N. Katju, Jawahar lal Nehru (who put on his barrister robes after a lapse of 20 years) and a Muslim barrister called Asaf Ali (who, like Nehru, was a member of the Congress Working Committee). Shyam Lal Jain, a Congressman himself, was the steno of Asif Ali. In 1970 he had testified on oath to the G.D. Khosla Committee that on December 26/27, 1945, when working for the INA Defence Committee, he had been called by Pandit Nehru to type some documents at the residence of Mr Asif Ali. Nehru had showed him a report sent by a source, (possibly a mole in the INA) that Bose had reached Dairen in Manchuria at 1330 in the afternoon (of August 23, 1945). His plane was laden with gold bars and jewellery. He had tea and some bananas and then rode out in a jeep towards Russian territory (with two suitcases full of gold bars and ornaments). He was accompanied by Gen. Sheidei and three Indians. After about two to three hours, the jeep had returned and informed the pilot of the Plane that Netaji had entered Russian territory safely. Jain said he was asked to type out four copies of this hand written note. He was then asked to type out another letter addressed to Mr Clement Atlee, Prime Minister of England. Jain gave out what he recollected as the contents of that letter. These he reconstructed as follows,"I understand from a most reliable source that Subhash Chandra Bose, *your war criminal*, has been allowed by Stalin to enter Russian territory, which action of his is clear treachery and betrayal of faith as when Russia was an ally of the British and the Americans, Stalin should not have done so. This is just for your information and must be taken note of."He stated that he had been asked to burn the carbons of that letter, all copies of which were taken by Mr Nehru. If true, the dire implications of this letter are utterly shocking. What, however, is the reliability of this evidence on oath? It is at best tertiary evidence, reconstructed from memory after a long lapse. There are no original documents produced, just recollections of letters typed by the deponent in December 1945 during the course of the INA trials. However,

the evidence is on oath and it does raise some very disturbing questions. There is a dire need to bring this case to closure now.

The Destruction of files

The Home Ministry had conceded before the Khosla Committee that about 30 classified files and papers and files on Bose were either missing or destroyed. These files and papers were in the personal possession of Mr. Nehru, who had been assisted by his confidential secretary, Mohmaad Yunus. Anuj Dhar points out that a record of the indices indicated that these were important files. :-

File No 23(156)/51 was about – The Indian National Army in the Far East

File No 23(11) 56-57 was about The INA Treasure

File No 12(226) 56- PM was about Investigation into the Circumstances leading to the Death of Subhash Chandra Bose. This most sensitive file was marked for Prime Minister's level only. It is hard to accept that the destruction of these vital files was due to any oversight or for reasons of paucity of storage space. More records of Bose files destroyed has been released in March 2016.

Bose, the Russian Connection

The mighty Soviet Union simply unravelled in 1990-91. Two years down the line it ceased to be a Communist Country anymore. The Russian Federation, disowned its Soviet past and courtesy Glasnost, a lot of revelations began to tumble out of the former closet of the infamous Iron Curtain. The Asiatic Society of Bengal had inked an agreement with the Institute of Oriental studies in Moscow to probe the missing links in Indian History. As part of this arrangement, Purabi Roy, a research scholar of Jhadavpur University had been visiting Russia. She had got in touch with Victor Turadzhev, an associate editor of the Russian Journal *Asia and Africa Today.* He was provoked by writings questioning the veracity of the air crash at Taihoku to deny what he called "extremely exaggerated rumours," amongst Indians and Russians about Bose's presence in the USSR. He however traced and produced Boses original letter of November 20, 1944, addressed to Soviet Ambassador Jacob Malik in Tokyo. It had earlier thought that this was returned without action. That was incorrect. It had duly been forwarded by

A Langfang, the Commissar of State Security (NKBG) to Col. A. Ostroshenkho, The Chief of the Fifth Divison of the First Command of the NKVD. It was written on the Arzi Hakumat Azad Hind pad and was quoted verbatim. Turdashev was shocked by the hostile reaction from the Indian Embassy in Moscow to his research work. He was miffed and advised Roy to commence her research at the *Military archives in Paddolsk and the archives in Omnsk*. At the Oriental Institute she was told that they were helpless and the request must come from the Government of India. A.A. Kutsenkov, a former KGB man suggested that the KGB archives had many documents on this subject and that the Government of India must move to get these files de-classified. This was confirmed by A. Kirichenko, head of International Section and a specialist on Soviet Japanese strategy. He confirmed the existence of files which relate to Japan, INA and the Soviet Union V. Kulev, a senior Professor was earlier in the KGBs India Cell and was certain that there were documents relating to Subhash Chandra Bose's arrival in in Russia after 1945. A look at Stalins personal archives, he said would be invaluable. The then Government of India however, was decidedly hostile to the idea of any such research in Russia and deliberately stonewalled all such attempts.

In 1996 however, Dr. Roy pulled off a coup of sorts. A former USSR General Kolesnikov had joined the Oriental Institute. She requested him to meet an Indian Parliamentary Delegation then in Moscow (it consisted of Lok Sabha Speaker P.A. Sanghma, Shushma Swaraj and others). Kolesnikov clearly stated that Bose was in the USSR in 1946. He recalled that he had seen a document in a file that noted the minutes of a meeting in August 1946. This was *a discussion among Politbureau members Voroshilov, Vyshinski, Mikoyan and Molotov. They were discussing whether Bose should be allowed to stay in the Soviet Union or otherwise.* Gen. Kolesnikov suggested that the Indian Government must officially seek access to Russian archives. (should not this date have been August 1945 and not 1946? Was the General mixing up the year?)

The very next year, Gen. Kolesnikov wrote an article entitled "Destiny and Death of Chandra Bose"in the January 1997 issue of the Russian Paper Patriot. The Gen highlighted the following facts from his extensive research:-

- In January 1941, Bose had arrived in Kabul with the hope of establishing contact with representatives of the Soviet leadership. Bhagat Ram Talwar, who had links with a representative of Soviet

Intelligence, Zaman (M.A. Allahverdov) tried to help him but this meeting did not take place. However, Bose managed to obtain a passport in the name of an Italian travelling to Germany via Moscow. In Moscow Achhar Singh Cheema tried to organise a meeting of the transit guest with the highest leadership of the Soviet Union. In all probability, such a meeting took place because Bose later sent a letter to Molotov from Berlin expressing his gratitude. (He also seemed to acknowledge this in his letter to Ambassador Malik).

- In the end of 1944, Bose again strove to establish contact with the Soviet leadership. With this in view, he sent an authorised representative of Bose's Interim Government in Exile (Kato Kuchi), to Omsk in Siberia, with the rank of an Ambassador. Bose went to Tokyo, where he tried to meet the Soviet Ambassador Jacob Malik and sent his above cited letter. At the close of the war, Boses envoy had managed to reach Omsk in Siberia. This suggested that the Soviet Union had recognised Bose's Azad Hind Government. (This is also corroborated by some papers declassified by India's Ministry of Defence, wherein Pramod Mehra of the National Archives in Delhi presented a paper based on these documents to show that the USSR had indeed recognised Bose's Government in exile.)
- Kolesnikov also added an ominous speculation. In the last phase of the war Stalin, had started a collection of interned political figures of foreign countries, possibly to use them when any opportunity presented itself. This included the last Emperor of China who was his captive. Kolesnikov speculates that there was some secret agreement between the USSR and Great Britain and Bose was considered an ally of the enemies of the anti-Hitler Coalition. (The sad news is, there was the Intelligence sharing pacts of December 1941 and March 1944. Britain had shared very sensitive intelligence during the war.) Did they now ask for quid pro quo in terms of Bose? Did Stalin oblige, if so, to what extent? Did he hand over Bose? Alternatively did he permit access for interrogation? The Soviet Union was not really subservient to the Allies. Did the British have to content themselves with just the Soviet assurance of a harsh internment for Bose in the Gulags of Siberia? All these are screaming questions that can only be resolved through declassification of relevant Soviet files.

Surrunder in Manchuria

Purabi Roy and Anuj Dhar provide interesting insights into the surrender of Japanese Forces in Manchuria. The sequence of events unfolds something like this:

- At the end of the war, Bose requests the Japanese to help him get to the Soviet Union which is not (yet) at war with them and try and work out arrangements which would be to the mutual benefit of both India and Japan. The Japanese govt approves of this finally or possibly just the Southern Army Commander Terauchi approves. I do not buy this ad hoc thesis. It was a whole of the Government approach. The Japanese did not act in such a fragmented manner.
- Bose writes to the Russian Ambassador in Tokyo in November 1944 and in December the same year, tries to meet him. The letter is favourably considered in Moscow and a plenipotentiary of The Azad Hind Government is stationed in Omsk.
- On August 9 the Russian Forces attack Manchuria. On August 11 the Japanese tell Bose that their time is up and he, their stauch ally till the bitter end, must move out to continue the struggle elsewhere. The Hikari Kikan and the Kampeitai now swing into action and Gen. Isoda of the Kikan maintains close laison. Bose is kept posted of the progress and rapid advance of the Red Army's massive blitzkrieg in Manchuria.
- The key commanders who are involved in the surrender negotiations in Manchuria are Gen. Yamada Otozo, the Chief of the Kwantung Army and his number two, Lt. Gen. Hata Hikosaburo. Lt. Gen. Sheidei is the Principle Staff Officer (PSO) of the Army in Manchuria. He is a Russian Language expert as also an expert in international law and surrender negotiations. He has been tasked to negotiate this surrender to the Russians. Field Marshal Terouchi of the Southern Army has also personally tasked Gen. Sheidei ensure that Bose is included in these parleys and enabled to go over to the Russians (possibly with that tranche of gold) so that he can continue the war for Indian Independence, now from a new strategic direction.
- The Kempeitai arranges the aircraft and on August 17, 1945, Gen. Sheidei flies into Saigon to pick up His Excellency Chandra Bose and escort him safely across the border to the Russians in Manchuria. They

take off for Dairen. Meanwhile a plane crash is enacted in Taihoku by Col. Rehman and the Kempeitai.

- Gen. Hikosabura meets Russian Maj. Gen. Shelekor to discuss surrender modalities of the Kwantung Army. Was Gen. Sheidei also involved in these negotiations?He is not just a language expert but also International Law expert. The Russian offensive continues apace at break neck speed. About1.3 million Soviet forces were involved. 80,000 Japanese and about 12,000 Russian forces were killed in the Blitzkrieg that brought the Soviets within 50 miles of the Japanese island of Hokakaido. The Japanese were thoroughly alarmed. There is a view that it was not so much the atom bombs but the Soviet massive ground invasion in Manchuria that forced Japan to surrender. It is one of the most audacious and fast paced operations in the world's military history. It was led by the legendary Field Marshal Zhukov himself.
- On August 22, 1945, the Kawntung Army under the command of Gen. Otozo finally surrenders to Gen. Alexander Vasileveski of the Soviet Red Army in the Manchurian capital. The Japanese news Agency Domei announces the sad demise of excellency Chandra Bose on the very next day in Tokyo.
- On that day,(August 23) Gen. Sheidei and Chandra Bose land in a plane and cross over to the Soviet Army lines in a jeep laden with two suit cases with the INA treasure and surrender. As per British Intelligence sources, three Indian officials also accompanied. This plane took off from Tokyo. It waits till the Jeep returns after three hours with a mission accomplished message. The plane then flies back to Tokyo.

Role of SMERSH

In his narrative, Iqbal Malhotra's reconstruction introduces another institutional actor, the Soviet Intelligence Agency called SMERSH, which is charged with counter- intelligence tasks in newly occupied territories. The SMERSH was set up in 1943 by the direct orders of Stalin to politically consolidate the territory captured by the Red Army. There were thousands of Russians in Manchuria, including Russian émigrés from the Tsar era. The SMERSH was headed by Victor Abakumov, who is said to have had a close, personal friendship with Stalin. Colonel Georgii Utekhin of the SMERSH

was in Dairen. He was in charge of arresting all foreigners in areas secured by the Red Army. He reported directly to the SMERSH Chief. SMERSH operatives had convinced Gen. Otozo Yamada, Chief of the Japanese Kwantung Army in Manchuria to surrender). It is the Soviet SMERSH agency to which Bose and Shedei must have surrendered and disappeared behind the Iron Curtain forever.

The Fate of Bose

So what happened to Bose? In all probability, the Russian speaking Gen. Shidei had brokered a deal with the SMERSH for surrender of the Kwantung Army and intact capture of Unit 731 (the Biological warfare Unit) in return for amnesty and asylum for himself and Bose in the USSR. This is borne out by evidence that Shidei was never captured and tried for war crimes either by the USA or USSR. Along with Gen. Shidei, Bose must also have sought asylum in the USSR through SMERSH. Bose therefore simply disappeared within the folds of the Iron Curtain in the USSR. Since, as per the Allies, he was a war criminal (especially from the Anglo-US perspective) and India was a Crown Dominion until January 26, 1950 it made little sense for Bose to come in from the cold even if he wanted to. Starting with Gen. Tojo, about six senior leaders of the Japanese Armed Forces that he knew, were hanged after the Tokyo War Crime Trials and many more sent to prison for life. Most of the convicted Generals of the Kwangtung Army in Manchuria were shipped in March 1950 to Camp Number 48 in the Lezhnevsky District in Siberia, about 50 kms from Suzdal in the Soviet Gulag. Iqbal Feels that VIP Generals like the German Gen. Von Paulus (Sixth Army, Stalingrad fame) and the Japanese Manchurian Army Commanders were interned here. So Bose and Gen. Sheidei must also have been interned here, is the inductive logic of Iqbal. Quite possible, for that would have facilitated their detailed interrogation and the best interrogation teams could have been located here for ease of administrative handling. Were the British also provided access to Bose here? It can't be ruled out, though the Russians were then at the peak of their power and had no need to oblige Great Britain.

In 1951, the SMERSH organisation was disbanded and its leadership purged. Both Viktor Abakumov and Colonel Georgii Utekhin were executed. As a consequence, Bose and Gen. Shidei, says Iqbal Malhotra, would have become unprotected assets of a disbanded Intelligence Organisation. In such circumstances, they would have been shipped out to

the Soviet Gulag. Even more likely, they could have been simply executed as they were considered as inconvenient. This inference may not really hold true. As per the testimony of Gen. Kolesnikov, Bose's case had been discussed at the highest level of the Soviet Polit Bureau itself and they were debating what to do with him. I do not think the Soviet polit bureau would delegate this decision to the whims of the local jailers in the Gulag. Any decision about Bose would have to come from the very highest level in Moscow, from Stalin himself. And Stalin was collecting war trophies (like the last Emperor of China) with the help of which he could blackmail most governments in newly emerging countries. So how useful was Bose and what did Stalin do with him?

The British Perspective on Bose

Let me now piece together some disjointed facts to try and unravel the truth. Having seen the Russian end of the scenario let us now revert to events that were then taking place in London and New Delhi to reconstruct what could have possibly happened. Only once we have such a hypothesis in place can we start looking for corroborative evidence in the documents we get from various sources in India, Russia, Japan and Great Britain. Only with such a set of probable hypotheses can we discern where precisely to look for what. The matrix of possibilities has to be outlined carefully. Before I spell these out I would like to put forth one critical set of facts.

The Mudie Analysis

The initial news of Boses death in the air crash was greeted with a great deal of scepticism not just in New Delhi but also in London. Wavell's first reaction was that this was precisely the kind of thing that he expected to hear. We now know from declassified intelligence reports of the British that they were very closely tracking the movements of Bose, the greatest enemy of the Empire, almost on a day to day basis and were well aware of his plans to escape to Russia (both from human and technical intelligence sources). Suddenly we see a volte face-a decision to accept the air crash thesis and stick to it with a rare stubbornness. This fixity of narrative was duly transmitted to the successor Indian Government in New Delhi. So what happened? The Twelve Part, Transfer of Power documents released by Britain, give selective leaks about what happened. A critical document is the

Home Member's (Home Minister's) letter of August 23 1945. Sir Robert Francis Mudie was the Home Member (minister) in the Viceroys Council in New Delhi. On August 23, 1945, he sent a Top Secret letter to Sir Evan Meredith Jenkins, Private secretary to the Viceroy Lord Wavell, on what to do with Bose. He sent along with this letter a detailed Note the Home department had prepared in consultation with Richard Tottenham, Additional Secretary in the Home Department and (more importantly) Norman Smith, the first Police Officer to take over as the Director Intelligence Bureau. The note begins with a rhetorical question "the most difficult question that will confront the Home department in the near future is the treatment of Subhash Chandra Bose."It then proceeds to list a number of options:-

- "Bring him back to India and try him either for waging war against the King Emperor or under the Enemy Agent's Ordinance.
- Interning him in India would only lead to an agitation to let him out and to his release in a short time. He might then escape to Russia, as he did in 1941.
- There is more to be said for detention and internment somewhere out of India. Out of sight would be, to some extent, out of mind and the agitation for his release might be less. Also escape to Russia would be difficult.
- In many ways, *the easiest course would be to leave him where he is and not ask for his release*. He might of course, in certain circumstances, be welcomed by the Russians. This course would raise fewest political difficulties but the security authorities consider that in certain circumstances his presence in Russia would be so dangerous as to rule it out altogether."

"Leave him where he is," this is a startling disclosure. Were the British aware of his presence in Russia? Had they decided to leave him there? This assumption is contradicted by the assertions/ speculations in that letter that he could escape to Russia. So what did Mudie imply by "leave him where he is"? When we now correlate this document with the probable events we have recorded earlier in this chapter, the only conclusion is, that the British knew he was Stalin's prisoner and they possibly asked him to intern Bose in Siberia

itself, as far from prying Indian eyes, as possible. Recently declassified files in India (March 2016) indicate that the British Cabinet held a meeting on 20 October 1945 to consider what to do with Bose in the Post War scenario. It also discussed a confidential note sent by the Viceroy Lord Wavell regarding finalisation of a policy towards Bose. Did the British intelligence agencies seek access to Bose in the Siberian dungeons, to ferret out from his lips whatever nuggets of information about the INA that the British Intelligence did not already have? It is a most depressing possibility but one which just can not be ruled out at all. Maybe the British simply requested the Russians to be harsh with him on their behalf. We do not know. That is why we need access to the IB files in India and Russian files of the SMERSH and the Manchurian strategic offensive of August 1945. We need the files of the Kempeitai and Japan's Kwantung Army in Manchuria. We also need the British MI-5 and MI-6 Files. The longer these are delayed, the worse these dark speculations will become. The unvarnished truth may be the best for all concerned. What we do know is that if "let him be where he is" was the preferred option of Mudie and company, the best narrative to put out in the public domain was that Bose had died in the air crash. Dead men do not scream when they are tortured. They also tell no tales. So there were great advantages that would accrue out of declaring Bose as dead in the air crash, even as he was actually alive in a Soviet Gulag and being relentlessly tortured by British interrogation teams.

If the above speculation is true,the most despicable role in that dismal scenario would have been played by the Government of free India, which decided to stick to this British crafted narrative for close to seven decades with a determination and tenacity that was utterly astonishing. Why? What residual loyalty did it owe to the Raj? Pushing the aircraft crash thesis in such a scenario amounted to a connivance to cover up Boses incarceration and possible torture in Siberia. Or was it, as some speculate, born out of self-interest? Was Bose viewed as a threat, a rival claimant to the throne of Delhi by the rulers of free India? One sincerely and truly hopes, that one is wrong but simple application of mind and deductive reasoning can lead us to no other logical conclusion, unless hard facts to the contrary are made available. For the sake of our self-respect as a people, India now needs to see those facts.

Indo Soviet Relations and the Bose Aspect

Stalin, the worlds greatest warlord, whose Red Armies had almost single–handedly defeated Hitlers legions, had nothing but contempt for Gandhi and Nehru and their non-violent ways of seeking their freedom. Bose, in Stalins perspective, had collaborated with his greatest enemy, Adolf Hitler. For almost three years Stalin had refused to see the first Indian Ambassador in Moscow, Smt. Vijaylakshmi Pandit, (Nehru's sister). The change came with the next Indian Ambassador, the scholarly Dr Radhakrishnan who was later to become India's President). Radhakrishnan was able to bring about a sea change in India-USSR relations. Intelligence reports had by then reached Stalin's desk from his operatives in India. These stated that the new government did not seem such hopeless colonial lackies after all. Maybe they could be weaned away from the British coattails, these reports suggested. So towards the end of his reign, Stalin seemed to thaw towards the new regime in India by gradual degrees and accept their professions of non-alignment. After Stalins' death however, these was a *sea change* and Kruschev and Bulganin made a major outreach to India. Had Bose still been alive he would have been needed less and less, as the relations improved progressively between Nehru's India and the USSR. The only reason to keep him alive was as a possible hedge for regime change options in India in the years ahead. But if the existing regime was playing ball how useful was Bose? Given Bose's state of health after prolonged incarceration in British prisons, how long was he likely to last in the Siachen like weather conditions of Siberia? This is a question best left to medical experts to hazard an opinion.

Matrix of Options

In conclusion, the matrix of options regarding what happened to Bose can be reduced to just four. These are summarised below:-

- **The air crash Hypothesis** The Mukherjee Commission has ruled out this option. I have listed several reasons which make it most implausible. This was the Japanese deception narrative designed to help Bose escape to the USSR. Possibly, the British simply hijacked this air crash narrative to ensure that Bose remained stuck in Siberia and was thereby blanked out entirely from public memory and attention in his home land. The Nehruvian dispensation adopted this narrative with a determination that was surprising in its sheer tenacity and dogmatism.

- **The Death in Siberia Hypothesis** The evidence available so far and simple deductive reasoning, unfortunately seems to point towards this option as the most plausible. The variations range from death by torture, plain execution (firing squad) or simply death due to the extreme cold and harsh labour in the Siberian Gulag. Time range wise, death could have occurred anywhere between one to five years or so of his internment.
- **Assassination by British Combat Aircraft/ Special Forces** Churchill, as we are all aware, had issued orders to assassinate Bose as he tried to escape from Afghanistan to Germany. These orders were never revoked. Churchill was very much the Prime Minister when the war ended. We know from declassified intelligence reports that the British were very closely tracking the movements of Bose towards the end of the war and they were specifically aware that he was trying to escape towards the Soviet Union's forces advancing in Manchuria. They had very accurate technical intelligence in terms of cipher code breaking machines. Could the British have shot down his escape aircraft anywhere over South East Asia or beyond? They did have airfields in Burma. The technical issues therefore are, from which airfield was the interception carried out? The range of British Fighter aircraft of that era was limited and there was no air to air refuelling. The chances of an air/ground based Commando team reaching Singapaore or Thailand or Vietnam are even less than for a fighter aircraft to execute such a mission. This option has been seriously suggested by Bhuvan Lal. However my technical analysis in terms of equipment and capacities available in that era, seem to rule this theory out all together. Keeping such an operation secret would have been very difficult-most certainly, it could not have been kept under warps for so long.
- **Surviving Siberia Option-The Gumnami Baba Thesis** So did Bose manage to survive Siberia's harsh Siachen like winters and the very harsh Gulag conditions? Medical details available from Bose's biography indicate a somewhat delicate and high–strung constitution. Long spells of incarceration and mal-nutrition in British prisons and the very high levels of stress that he had undergone, had taken a severe toll of his health. Personally I am doubtful of how long he could have survived in the Siachen like Siberian white out conditions. If he had

managed to survive the Stalin era of ill-treatment, he possibly had a fighting chance of longer survival, because a large number of concentration camp inmates were set free after the death of Stalin in 1956 and the dismantling of Beria's Police state (Kruschev had called him to his office and shot him personally, it is said). So did Netaji survive the Gulag and return to India to live incognito as the Gumnami Baba? A team of dedicated researches like Anuj Dhar, Chandrachud and Amalan Gosh have put forth this thesis. I respect their scholarship and deep research. The latest tranche of Netaji files released on 29 March 2016 cites a PMO file which records that Netaji made three broadcasts on 26 December 1945, 01 January 1946 and the third one in February 1946. These seemed to indicate he was in Russia and was closely following events in India. This strengthens the thesis that he had escaped to Russia and was alive till February 1946 at least. This information necessitates that we press Russia to provide access to SMERSH and Soviet archives. The Gumnami Baba thesis *though remotely possible, is unfortunately not probable*. The first set of negatives are:

- The state of Netajis health *per se*, Was he in a position to survive Siachen like conditions in Siberia (extreme cold climate) if so for how long?
- Secondly, as listed in pp 120-121 of the Mukherjee Commission Report, the DNA tests of the teeth of Gumnami Baba do not match with the DNA profile of the Bose family, neither from the paternal or maternal side. This unfortunately is hard empirical evidence.
- The third reason stems from the very personality profile of Bose. He was a fiery and outspoken personality, deeply committed to the cause of his country and the fate of his people. With such strong views on what needed to be done, could such a personality have come back to India when it was free; when his sworn enemies of the Raj had gone, would he live incognito and silent for two decades plus? The British Raj had failed to silence him. How could the far more peaceful Nehruvian dispensation have achieved this feat of gagging him so completely after independence in his own

land and amongst his own people? There are other speculations about such sightings of Netaji.

- **Masquerade** There is however, a note of caution that must be injected into this argument. There is the case of The Shaulmari Baba, who had mysteriously emerged in Bengal and set up a huge ashrama (many inmates of which were former informants of the IB who had done their damnedest to betray Bose). They had proclaimed the Shaulmari Baba was Netaji in disguise, till the whole set of fraudulent claims were dismissed by the baba himself. Were some intelligence agencies trying to plug into the universal hunger for news about Bose and soften the Russian death angle by creating an alternative hypothesis that Bose had survived the Siberian Gulags and had come back to India to live as a mendicant as he always wanted to secretly. He had died at a very ripe old age due to natural causes in his own land. This takes the whole sting out of the tale and softens the blow for the Indian people. Were some agencies also planting the Gumnami Baba theory to create a narrative that would soften the blow for the Indian people? This needs to be investigated.

A Summation, The Way of the Samurai

In conclusion, all one can say is that the saga of Subhash Chandra Bose is a deeply moving tale of superlative courage and commitment to the cause of his country. His was a most remarkable and extraordinary life. There is only one term that truly describes this most remarkable personality – he was a Samurai – an archetypal warrior spirit. He was a scholar – warrior par excellence, a self taught Supreme Commander whose strategic insights, (like those of the legendary Mao-ze dong of China), were always validated by subsequent events and outcomes. He is one of the most charismatic personalities of the last century, a living legend in his own time, like Lawerence of Arabia he had a place in the sun. Over 70 year after his reported death, his legend refuses to die out. No work of fiction can quite replicate the intense drama and the unbelievable adventure that his life was. Selected to the heaven born fraternity of the ICS, he gave it all up to become a revolutionary. The great escape across North India and Afghanistan to Germany, with the assassination squads of the Specials Operations Executive looking for him in Iran and Turkey, masquerading now as Muslim insurance

agent, now a deaf and dumb Pathan, now as an Italian Count, then a German mystery man in a submarine, fluent in many languages, an agent extraordinary, a soldier, a statesman, a consummate diplomat, a scholar, an author, and a warrior, Bose was a man of diverse talents and amazing accomplishments. Raising the Indesche Brigade in Germany from former Indian Prisoners of War, moulding a colonial army into an Army of libertion sans caste and creed, escaping from Europe to Asia in a submarine, the only recorded case of submarine to submarine transfer in the entire War; Supreme commander of the INA a 60,000 strong force of which 26,000 willingly martyred themselves for the cause he espoused with such burning zeal. The leader of a state in exile,Commander of an Army of Liberation, a moderniser in the tradition of a Kemal Ataturk and above all, a great patriot and an icon of nationalism. The whole Indian diaspora in South East Asia waited for his coming like that of a messiah. His Army waited with bated breath for a miracle maker, an inspiring leader of men in battle; a tenacious fighter who just would not give in, whatever the odds and setbacks. He simply picked up the pieces and started all over again with that never say die spirit that was truly so very extraordinary. An inspirational leader of men, a spell binding orator, a gifted writer, a soldier and a statesman and above all else, a true and tenacious warrior whose courage was exemplary. His foresight was most uncanny and amazing. His most famous insight was about the autonomy of the outcome in the Second World War – which ever side won or lost, he said, India would be free. This was a most uncanny insight and it proved to be amazingly true. He had phenomenal diagnostic abilities and he clearly saw that the non-violent methods of Mahatma Gandhi were entirely with in the tolerance thresholds of the empire. He saw the tremendous opportunity provided by the Second World War to free India from the clutches of colonial rule. He correctly diagnosed the loyalty of the sepoys to the Raj as the real centre of gravity of the freedom struggle in India. It was this loyalty of the Indian sepoy that he shook to the core and made it impossible for British colonial rule to continue in India in the wake of the Second World War. More than any other man, it was Bose who was the true catalyst for India's freedom. If we are a free nation today, we owe it largely to that one man, a man called Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose.

In the indigenous Indian tradition Bose was an exemplar of the Indian ideal of the *sant- sipahai*-the archetypal soldier-saint. Most of India's best known warriors have been saints–whether you look at Guru Govind Singh,

the founder the Sikh military brotherhood or at Shivaji Maratha, the two men who between themselves, were responsible for an Indian military revival and renaissance that took place in the 16th and 17th centuries, their outstanding trait was that unique synthesis of the ideals of soldering and sainthood. Bose so clearly belonged to this tradition of soldier-saints. While still a boy just out of school, he had left home in search of a guru and wandered for months in the quest for that spiritual guide. He was a great devotee of Ramakrishna and a follower of that moderniser and saint, Swami Vivekananda.

Two renowned fighting races, the Germans and the Japanese saw in him a great commander and inspirational leader of men.The Japanese, in fact, paid him their highest compliment-they called him an "Indian Samurai"for in more ways than one, Bose exemplified the true spirit of the Samurai.

What is a Samurai, asks Inazo Nitobe? The Samurai surprisingly stands for the rather common military term-"scholar–warrior". The Samurai incidentally are warriors who follow the code of the Bushido. The term "Bushi" was used to refer to the *warrior-poet ideal* that later became synonymous with the Samurai. In ancient Japan the Samurai were called the Uruwashi. This ancient ideal of the warrior poet was expressed by the pictrogram for the word Uruwashi- this combined the characters *of bun-literary arts with bu or military arts*. So in essence, a Samurai is a warrior–poet or what we today refer to as a scholar-warrior. That is precisely what Bose was. By vowing to loyally serve his lord, even if it meant losing his life, the Samurai freed himself of all self-interest and self-aggrandisement. In short he now lived the Indian ideal epitomized in the Gita, of *Nishkam Karma*-of action-of devotion to a cause or ideal which is much higher than the petty self without expecting anything in return. That is the way of the Samurai,the way of deep commitment to one's country and one's people and at the same time it is way of great poetry and refinement, of learning, of excellence both in the military and the fined arts. I know of few men who so truly exemplify this ideal in their lives and actions than Subhash Bose. In the IMA (Indian Military Academy) we used to call such a soldier par excellence- an "Officer and a Gentleman."

That was quintessential Bose.

10

Epilogue, the Legacy of Bose, the need to revise Indian History

His proud, importunate and violent spirit was a flaming sword forever unseathed in defence of the land he worshipped with such surpassing devotion. A greater love hath not man than this,that he lay down his life for his country and his people.

– Sarojini Naidu

What then was the legacy of Bose?

The greatest legacy of this warrior was the fact that India today is a free country and the tricolour flutters proudly in the breeze that blows over this land. That is the proudest legacy of Bose. During the war, for almost five years, from 1941 onwards, the British had made every effort to blot out his very name from public consciousness in India. Then in a brief burst of triumphalism (after they won the war) they had gone to town about how they had beaten Bose and his INA. His men were put on public trial in the Red Fort to overawe the natives and "restore morale" in the British Indian Army. This had backfired very badly and instigated a massive uprising in India followed by mutinies in the British Indian Armed forces. The British were forced to leave India in a years time.

That was the legacy of Bose. Surprisingly, after Independence the Government of Free India took it upon itself to bury that legacy of Bose, disband and send home the INA men without pension, treat members of the

Bose family as traitors to be spied upon. Despite this second blanket ban on Bose, this concerted attempt to remove him from the history books, the miracle is that the legacy of Bose survives and grows more relevant with each passing day. Bose was simply an icon of Indian Nationalism. The government had gone to extraordinary lengths to prove that Bose had indeed died in that air crash. It was so eager to bury his legacy of armed struggle and propagate in its place a new narrative – India had gained independence by a unique and unprecedented freedom struggle that relied solely on the soft power tools of *Ahimsa* and non-violence. It had gained entry into the Westphalian system of nation states (based on the monopoly of violence) by the unprecedented methods based upon the new doctrine of soul-force and non- violence. This in itself was a contradiction in terms. The 26,000 men of the INA who had suffered so much and had died fighting on the India-Burma border, were soon turned into a forgotten footnote in Indian history. The story of their struggle was erased from our school textbooks and history books. There were no memorials, no museums, no movies, no songs, no ballads about the INA. It was as if this organisation had never existed or fought for India. Yet the legacy of Bose persists and has survived to this day. That trenchant refusal to die, that persistence perhaps, of the timeless ideals of duty, honour, country and courage that perhaps is his true legacy.

Militant Nationalism as a Model of Military Motivation, The Bose Perscription

It is one of the curious facts of history that in the Second World War, the Axis armies of the authoritarian states were all based on the motivational methodology of Militant Nationalism, a deeply entrenched patriotism that was deliberately fanned to fever pitch with nationalistic propaganda, community singing, martial music and pomp and pageantry and flaming rhetoric. Militarisation of the population played a major role in the success of this model. The German Whermacht and the Imperial Japanese Army were all based on the motivational methodology of militant nationalism. This produced very highly motivated armed forces that had withstood the rigours of modern war exceptionally well. Thus German and Japanese units decimated to the extent of 80 percent had still retained their combat cohesion. These relied upon a great deal of faith and trust in one's subordinates and permitted them a very great deal of latitude and initiative

in the execution of the mission. Loose, mission type orders were given out in terms of the Higher commanders' broad intent which the subordinate commanders were then free to further as they saw fit and as fleeting opportunities presented themselves on the battle field. In sharp contrast the Allied military organisation of the democratic countries were far more rigid and regimented and relied heavily on close supervision and detailed command and control mechanisms. They tried by automaton type training, to reduce their soldiers to highly predictable units of response; to morons and idiots who would simply obey orders like Zombies and display no independence of thought or initiative. They were mostly based upon Linds' Second wave of warfare with elaborate fireplans and detailed orders that robbed junior commanders of all initiative. The allies had won purely on the basis of their overwhelming material and industrial superiority. They used their prepanderant resources in pure battles of attrition that overtime simply overwhelmed the far more mobile and tactically brilliant German and Japanese forces.

Bose had introduced the German and Japanese military motivational model in the Indesche Legion he had raised in Germany and the INA he had inherited in Malaya.He had managed to instill a very high degree of motivation in these two forces that he had raised. The INA was a very significant departure from the ethnicity based Regimental model of motivation of the British Indian Army and in this radical departure, he had taken a huge risk that proved to be eminently justified in the light of the subsequent actual combat performance of the INA units and formations. Bose therefore was a great military innovator of organisations and motivational methodologies. What he lacked perhaps was hands on combat experience at the tactical and operational level but he more than made up for it by his Strategic acumen and intuition. Like Mao, his insights about the grand strategic directions and turns of he Second World War and the Indian freedom struggle proved to be correct and prophetic, almost always and every time.

The Strategic Direction of the Freedom Struggle

Court historians in India however, said that the real heroes were the Congress workers and *satyagrahis* led by Nehru, who had forced the British to leave just by moral persuasion, their soul-force and pure non-violence. Perhaps this narrative of state was essential to legitimise the rule of the

Nehruvian dispensation. It was sought to be propagated in a manner that would wipe out forever the legacy of Bose and his INA which had waged an armed struggle to free India and made such enormous sacrifices in that process. Bose and his men had suffered intensely but they never faltered in that struggle and their resolve to free India. That undying spirit of the INA was the legacy of Bose. That tenacious and implacable warrior went to such extreme lengths to free his motherland and his people. Overwhelmed finally by the inexorable tides of history, his was a head bloodied but unbowed till the very bitter end. In the face of comprehensive defeat and adversity, he simply refused to give in, he simply refused to resign himself to fate. There were so many instances in his life, when his entire life's work simply seemed to have come crashing about his ears. His response was the same each time. He simply picked up the pieces and started all over again. If Germany could not help to free India, he would leave Berlin. He travelled halfway round the world in a submarine. In what was the sole case of submarine to submarine transfer in the Second World War, he paddled his way through a sea storm to get to the Japanese submarine that had come half way round the world, to pick him up. It was a life far stranger than fiction.

By that time, persuasive methods conducted through a non-violent struggle under the leadership of Gandhi, had failed. An armed assault on the citadel of the British Empire in India was the only alternative left to deliver the country from bondage. While Bose's compatriots in India remained totally wedded to an ideological creed (non-violence), which at that time could only serve the British interests and postpone the advent of independence, and while their ideological interpretations of the new revolutionary regimes in Europe (again largely influenced by British propaganda) prevented them from even harbouring any thought of seeking their alliance and co-operation in the struggle against a common enemy, Subhash Chandra Bose alone had the courage to take the great plunge.

In Southeast Asia he took charge of the INA, trebled its size to a respectable force of some 60,000 fighting men, and formed an Indian Government in exile. He declared war against Great Britain. He then joined his Japanese allies in a major land invasion of British India. His aim was to trigger a massive Indian uprising. He was certain that the very news that an Army of Indians had come to free this land and their people, would suffice to trigger a country wide rebellion against the British. It was above all an Information war.

India, he was certain, was ready to rise. The British had engineered a famine in Bengal. 3 million "*beastly Indians*" (to use Churchill's phrase) had died. The racist, colonial regime had lost all moral right to rule India. The colonial regime had lost all legitimacy. India was dry tinder – all it needed was the spark lit by the INA to start a prairie fire. The invasions came and went. For five months, the fiercest battles of the Second World War, raged in Imphal-Kohima as the combined Japanese-INA Forces fought grimly against an Allied Force almost twice its size, that had complete command of the air. Even then it was touch and go. Had Gen. Sato been permitted to break out towards the railhead of Dimapur, it would all have been over for the Raj. Grim battles were waged but there was no uprising in India. Why? It was all about information dominance. With draconian wartime censorship in place, the British had completely blacked out all news of the INA. Very few Indians knew that an Army of Indians was fighting for their freedom along with the armies of Nippon.

The battles of Imphal and Kohima turned into a logistical disaster. The Japanese-INA forces were reduced to starvation, famine and severe malnutrition. The monsoons washed out their lines of supply. Rarely have men suffered so much. But these Japanese and INA formations did not disintegrate. They did not crack up. Famished and starved, and now in retreat, they miraculously retained their cohesion and espirit de corps. The British, Australian and the Indian Army units in Malaya and Burma had disintegrated and surrendered in droves in 1942, under much lesser harsh conditions. The Japanese-INA units' defeat did not turn into a rout. It became instead a celebration of the sheer resilience of the human spirit in the face of impossible odds.

That perhaps is the Legacy of Bose.

The first INA Division was largely decimated by disease and starvation, but it did not disintegrate. It exhibited enormous reserves of spiritual strength and fighting spirit. Here was an Army of Indians fighting to free India, and they had thrown their hearts and soul into the fight. Overwhelmed by the odds, they still fought gallantly and tenaciously. They were inspired by one man, they called their Netaji.

The 2nd INA Division fought fiercely to contest the Irrawaddy River crossings and at Mount Popa. The British were expecting them to surrender in droves. Amazingly they fought back even when their backs were against the wall. The whole miracle was summed up in Gen. Gracey's words to Col.

Prem Sahgal of the INA (Brigade Commander 2nd INA Regiment), "What did you mean, your people, by going on fighting? We had armour, artillery; your chaps had nothing. But instead of surrendering you fought. It was madness. Why did you do it? Why didn't you come over?"The British Commander of the 20th Indian Division was stupefied at the resistance his men had faced from a poorly armed and very poorly paid, ragtag bunch of Indians, led by their own native officers. There had been only one word for their tenacity of will and their spirit– "Madness".

"Of course it was madness General", Prem had replied quietly. "A revolutionary army lives on the spirit of madness" (Peter W. Fay, *The Forgotten Army*, p.399). That sums up the story of the INA led by an Indian Samurai called Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose. That is truly the real legacy of this Samurai.

Rashid Yusuf Ali was one of the star interrogators of the 14th Army's Forward Interrogation Teams.(FIT) He had carried out the interrogation of Col. Prem Sahgal and most important INA personalities. Most of these interrogation reports, says Peter Fay, are lost. But Rashid recounted Prem and Lakshmi's interrogation report from memory to Peter Fay. Rashid said:

> "They did not act as if they had been defeated because they did not believe they had. A battle, they seemed to imply, had been fought and lost. But the campaign was not over. It went on, not on the ground now but in the consciousness of the Indian people."

Rashid was an Indian (his mother however was English). He was schooled in England and commissioned there. Later he had joined 7 Rajput and subsequently had been to the Intelligence School at Karachi (alongwith Hugh Toye). In his Interrogation Report, he labelled Prem as Black. But he had written, "I cannot call him a traitor. He is a misguided patriot; one of the few sincere believers in the Azad Hind Fauj, scruplous in the defence of Indian interests, even against the Japanese. He is under no illusion as to his probable fate." This was the impact of the INA on a hardened and trained interrogator. What was their impact on the people of India?

To start with nothing.

Information Wars

Simply because the very tight dragnet of military censors had not let a word about the INA leak out to the people of India. The story of Bose and the INA had been blanked out of every newspaper in India. There was a complete and total blanket ban on any news coverage of the INA or its operations. What made that relatively easier was that the battles of Imphal and Kohima had taken place in a remote corner of North Eastern India. It had been easy to utterly blank it out from the Indian consciousness. The ethnographic terrain in the North East was so very distinct and different from the rest of India. The British had deliberately kept the tribes of this remote frontier region isolated from the rest of the country. Most of the Naga, Mizo and Manipuri tribes had been converted to Christianity. So in the human terrain in the North East there was a distinct break water, a fire wall. Indians from the plains needed an inner line permit to enter here. This ethnic firewall prevented the dissemination and propagation of information about the INA and its arrival on Indian soil.

No wonder, Bose had been so keen to direct operations towards Chittagong– so that he could get right away to the Indian human terrain in Bengal. Here the news of the INA would have spread by word of mouth, by rumours and stories. There was no way the British could have stopped the propagation of such information in the ethnographic terrain of mainland Bengal. Netaji was already a living legend in Bengal and the news of the arrival of his army would have spread like wildfire. The entire legacy of Bose is littered with such attempts at choking all news and information about him and his exploits, blanking out all information about the INA that he had formed, trained and launched into battle. From 1941 to 1945, we saw one of the most comprehensive bans on information about Bose and his INA imposed by wartime military censors of Great Britain. There was a brief intergennum of a few months in end 1945 and beginning of 1946, when this veil of secrecy was suddenly lifted in an irrational burst of British hubris. The British had finally won the war. It had physically and psychologically drained the British Empire and left it fatally weakened and debilitated. However, savouring their triumph at the fag end of the war, the British could be forgiven for their brief burst of hubris. It had tragic consequences for their empire. In an irrational burst of triumphalism, the British now set out to make an example of the INA before the Indian people.

After the war, the news of INA could no longer be hidden. War correspondents advancing to Rangoon with the victorius 14th Army had

already filed reports of the INA units (Jiffs) opposing the advance and being swept aside. It was now time to tell the Indians that a bunch of their countrymen had had the audacity to wage war against the King Emperor. They were now the prisoners of the empire and the British would try them in public and hang the blighters to set a deterrent example. This is precisely how the British had brutally crushed the uprising in 1857. That too had been a revolt in the Presidency Armies of the East India Company. It had been crushed with the utmost brutality. The British would now make an example of these Jiff traitors. They also had to send a stern message to the 2.5 million men of the British Indian Army, who had remained loyal to their salt and their oath to the King Emperor. The implied message was simple- "don't even think about it."

The British also had to come to terms with the fact of how over 40,000 loyal Indian jawans to whom their white officers were the "Maai-Baap" (father-mother), could have gone over to join the INA. How could they have violated their oaths to the King Emperor? The British wartime propaganda was shrill and strident. These simple Indian soldiers had been tricked, duped, bullied and tortured into joining. They had been coerced. The fact is that the British soon came to believe in their own propaganda. This piece of fiction became deeply entrenched dogma, which the British officers now believed with great fervour to be true. They forgot the fact that their leadership in Malaya and Burma in 1942 had been a military disgrace. They had dumped their men unceremoniously and handed them over to the Japanese as if they were cattle to be traded. No, the average British officer in 1945 wanted to fervently believe that the Indians had not joined the INA voluntarily. They had been coerced, tortured, beaten and cajoled to join the INA.

In all earnestness these British officers now wanted to highlight the savagery of these few turncoats who had tortured Indian soldiers and forced them to join the INA. The bulk of the men were innocent and they were 'whites'. A few had become contaminated, they would be classed as 'Greys'. But there were the 'Blacks' who had tortured and coerced their countrymen and forced them to join the INA and betray their salt. Now an example must be set of these men. Their misdeeds should be made known to the people of India through their trials. To drive home the historical memory of the brutality and severity with which the 1857 uprising had been thoroughly crushed, the trials were to be held in the Red Fort in New Delhi.

Why the Red Fort?

Because this was the final objective of the INA's March to Delhi! They had proclaimed their intention to hoist the tricolour from the ramparts of this historic fort that symbolises the rulership of India. They wanted to march to this fort. So it was here they would be tried. It was in its deep dungeons that they would be tortured, made to scream and beg for mercy. It was here that they would be tried by General Court Martials and possibly hanged here, as an example and stern warnings to all natives.

So the hunt began for the INA bullies and executioners who had coerced 40,000 Indian soldiers into joining the INA. When the search started, they could hardly find any poor INA wretches who fitted the bill. Accusations had been made against many but the charges could not be made to stick. They were hardly provable in a court of law. Besides, there were technical difficulties in law. Most of these alleged incidents had occurred before three years and had thus become time-barred. To set the stage for these high profile trials a lot of advance publicity had been done. The aim was a psychological warfare offensive to paint out the INA in the blackest of colours, to fill their countrymen with loathing and revulsion for such miserable men who had dared to wage war against a benevolent King Emperor. It was another matter that the three million Indians who died of starvation in Bengal would not see it as benevolence. So, a full scale information offensive, a media blitzkrieg had been launched. Higher ups were becoming impatient for the mass ritual of retribution to begin.

So, finally, three INA Officers were brought to trial in the Red Fort, Shah Nawaz (a Muslim), Prem Sahgal (a Hindu) and G.S Dhillon (a Sikh). They were to be tried in the historic Red Fort, exactly where the last Mughal Emperor, Bahadur Shah Zafar was tried and transported for life to Burma. The humiliation of India in 1857 had been comprehensive and complete. Now a second trial was being held at the self same Red fort. The significance and historical resonance was not lost on the Indian people. The British were into another burst of triumphalism. After the First World War Indians had expected a measure of gratitude from Great Britain. To show the miserable browns their place, the British had perpetrated the massacre of Jalianwala Bagh. That had been a most significant turning point in race relations in India and the singular event that initiated the Indian march towards freedom.

In 1945 we would see another psychological dimension of the Jalianwala Bagh complex. Here were the three best Officers of the INA. They had put up a determined fight against the British even in a most hopeless situation. They now stood accused of ordering the execution of 4 INA men who had shamefully cast away their weapons and tried to run in the face of the enemy. In any self-respecting Army, that is a crime punishable with death. That is what the INA had done. Yet this trio of brave officers would be tried and hanged. However, what was now worrying the British was the rising wave of anger and deep resentment in the Indian population that these trials had aroused. Everywhere the INA men went they were being greeted as heroes. Huge masses of men came out to greet them. The news that an Army of Indians had actually been raised, trained and sent to fight to free India, had captured the imagination of the Indian people. There was a deep wave of anger and unrest boiling over in India. The moribund Congress leadership was quick to see this rising tide of anger and resentment. The Raj was now putting forth a spectacle of triumphalism and retribution. The same Raj that had callously caused a famine leading to 3 million deaths in Bengal, would now make a spectacle out of hanging three brave Indian officers who had dared to fight for the freedom of their country. They came from the three major communities of India. So the message was clearly to all Indians. They had been beaten and would now be hanged as common criminals for daring to wage war against their King Emperor.

The trials commenced on November 05, 1945 and lasted till December 31, 1945. A rising tide of public anger forced the Congress to mount a legal Defence Committee for their defence. The cornerstone of the colonial Empire in India was the majesty of Imperial Justice (Justice would become the pillar of the later Indian Constitution, not liberty, fraternity or equality, but Imperial Justice as inherited from the King Emperor). The British colonial press had swung into action to create a high voltage courtroom drama that would drive home to the natives, the consequences of waging war against the King Emperor. The media coverage was blistering. It was also a tragic mistake, a total goof up on the part of the Empire. The strident undertones of racial triumphalism were calculated to insult and outrage and they did indeed succeed in doing so. There was extensive coverage of Bose and his INA. Traitors, screamed the British Press. “Patriots–not Traitors” the Indian crowds roared back. It was a soap opera of monumental proportions. It was also an informational disaster of the most monumental kinds. These

three officers and the INA became symbols of India fighting for her independence. As stated, with that rising scale of violent, mass protests, the INA trials began. The first step was to prove the charges of treason, that these men had waged war against their King Emperor. This proved to be a highly emotive issue. The men said they were an Army of the Indian Government in exile that was recognised by 9 countries. It had duly declared war against Great Britain and enacted an INA Act (analogous to the Indian Army Act and Rules). These officers were part of a legally constituted force. Their loyalty to their country superseded their oath of loyalty to the King, whose colonial rule they regarded as illegal. This was heady news for the Indian public. These men received wild adulation as heroes. So far, the British media policy had been to ensure that India learnt as little about the "traitor Army and its leader", and what it did was as disparaging, as ugly as it could be made to be.

Now the floodgates of public information had been opened in the tragically mistaken belief that the Indian public would applaud the hanging of these "traitors". With each column of press coverage, the Indian public saw them as heroes and patriots. And then the mass protests grew angrier and more violent. Mobs were on rampage in city after city and police firing was failing to quell them or cow them down. British apprehensions and fears were mounting by the day. Nervous military staffs were now doing serious contingency planning for ultimate disaster.

Angry and screaming mobs burst on the streets of Calcutta, Karachi and so many towns of India. The first riots had started outside the court room in Delhi itself. More than 100 people were killed. Crowds in Calcutta had swelled to over a Lakh. Several people died in the police firing, yet these crowds simply reassembled and pressed on. The British were well and truly alarmed now about the safety of some 90,000 Europeans still living in India. The 1942 Quit India Movement had been crushed using 57 British, Australian and Canadian battalions of white troops. The British had then not taken the chance of using Indian troops against Indian people. The British troops however, were now tired, homesick and war-weary. In the closing stages of the war in Burma, they had exhibited an overwhelming desire to just get back to their families. Their families in turn were pursuing the British Government to get the boys back home. As recounted earlier, the British Divisions were being pulled out of Burma on priority and being sent back home. The entire British design of hanging on to their Empire in India

hinged on just one critical factor. About 2.5 million Indian soldiers were now being demobilised after the end of World War-II. These men were closely watching these high profile media trials in the Red Fort in Delhi. They were suddenly being deluged with information about the INA. *Their own countrymen were sneering at them as traitors. There was a great feeling of unrest and unease amongst the rank and file of the British Indian Army*. Ultimately the court found all these three officers guilty. Commander in Chief Auchinleck confirmed the sentence of cashiering, forfeiture of pay and allowances but remitted the transportation for life. All three were released after the trial. Frankly the British were now apprehensive of the backlash that would arise if any harsher sentence was given. The Statesman paper of Calcutta was disgusted. It wrote acidly, "we wish we could record having seen any wisdom,Indian or British, in the handling of the INA trials now concluded in Delhi. We have watched the unfolding of this strange drama, one of the gravest in implication that modern India has experienced, in amazement and disgust"

Field Marshal Wavell and Field Marshal Auchinleck were not at all sure of how the Indian soldiers of the British Indian Army would react. They were decidedly nervous. Wavell in fact was wavering the most. The British could hang on at best for 18 months more in India, he told London. The Imperialists in London were more aggressive. The Empire had to hang on, come what may. Contingency plans were drawn and tested. What if the Indian soldiers refused to obey their British officers in such a charged atmosphere? It would need five to six British Divisions to quell the large scale uprising and possible mutinies. The simple question was from where would these five divisions come?

The Spectre of the Revived Indian Army

The British Indian Army of 1945 was not the same as the Presidency Armies of 1857. For one, from just 190,000 it had swelled to a record size of 2.5 million men. It was the largest all-volunteer Army in the history of the world. When the Second World War started, there had been about 1,000 British officers who led a force of about 75,000 Indian jawans of the Indian Infantry (fighting Arm) component. There had been with them, just about 200 Indian officers and some 1,700 VCOs. By the time the war ended, however, the other ranks had multiplied four fold (to about 300,000), British officers three fold but Indian officers had increased ten fold (to about 2,000

plus). Shuja Nawaz in his magnum opus on the Pakistan Army supplies more precise figures. Indianisation had actually started in 1917 when the first batch of Indian officers were sent to Sandhurst. By 1919 the number of KCIOs in the Indian Army had gone up to 9 Kings Commissioned Officers (KCIOs). By the start of World War II the number of KCIOs was 400 in an officer cadre strength of 3000. By the end of the war the number of Indian officers had gone up to around 15,000. The number of British officers had gone up finally to 34,500 in 1945. The recent book by American scholar Steve Wilkinson has provided far more accurate data on the strength of the British Indian Army. It had, he says, 36,348 British Officers, 15,741 Indian Commissioned Officers, 53,342 British Other Ranks, and a total strength of some 2,285,936 men in arms. Most of these were British emergency commissioned officers. Now, an Emergency Commissioned English officer, often with little or no experience of India, was nothing like as close to his men as the pre-war regulars had been. That too would draw the sepoy to his Indian officer. Interrogation reports had clearly established "*the tremendous power and influence of the ICOs (Indian Commissioned Officers) over the men*". If the officers were prepared to volunteer, whole units would volunteer. And if the officers did not want to volunteer, then the men would also be disinclined. The British were worried about which way the Indian officers would now turn.

Peter Fay points out that the Interrogation reports highlighted a number of grievances which had deeply rankled with the Indian officers. Among them, the most galling was that all Indian other ranks saluted as a matter of course, when they passed a British officer. However, no British Other Rank would salute an Indian officer. Given the hierarchical structure of all armies, this led to great deal of resentment amongst Indian officers and men. It was made worse by deliberate racial slurs in the Officers' Messes and Clubs, many had signboards at their entrance – "Indians and Dogs not Allowed". Col. Wren of the British Military Intelligence had clearly warned that "It is clear that we have come to the parting of ways. We have, by our policy towards India, bred up a new class of officers who may be loyal to India and perhaps to the Congress but not necessarily loyal to us. For the first time since the Mutiny, this issue is making a major impact on the loyalty of the Indian Army. For the time being the rank and file may be loyal to the Sarkar." But Col. Wren was most unsure about the future.

Indians as a Fighting Force

The hold of Indian ICOs over their men had clearly been proved in Malaya. Indian units that mutinied or revolted would now not lack a combat tested and experienced leadership. One Indian, Cariappa, had reached the rank of Brigadier, there were several Colonels and well over a few thousand Majors, Captains and Lieutenants. The second factor was the quality of Indian troops and formations. The Indian Divisions had shown a remarkable tolerance for combat stress. Indian Divisions fought with tenacity and required far lesser logistical support than their British counterparts. Towards the end of the war,– a major change was visible. Most British senior commanders preferred to have Indian Divisions with them than British or Australian ones. These were proving far more sturdy and reliable in combat. British troops had perhaps started fighting earlier on in the war (at least two years earlier in France) and were clearly showing signs of war weariness and combat fatigue. Till the end of the war the Indian Divisions were raring to go and in full fighting vim. This was a sea change in the quality of Indian troops between 1857 and 1946.

Wavell, the man on the ground felt that Britain had just 18 months till which time the sepoys of the Indian Army would hold. If it had to retain, the loyalty of these men, it would have to make a clear declaration of its intent to grant independence to India. Imperialists sitting far away in London were less cognizant of the ground realities in India and insisted that the Empire hold firm. The men on the ground, Viceroy Wavell and Field Marshal Auchinleck, the Commander in Chief in India, were far less sanguine. In fact, they were now very nervous. Col. Wren's memorandum had clearly given warnings of the coming storm. Dealing with an angry Army of 2.5 million Indian sepoys being demobilised would not be a picnic. To start with the number of white British troops that would be needed to quell large scale uprisings and mutinies were just not available. At the very least, the estimate was five to six British divisions and these were simply not in sight then.

Loss of Legitimacy, The Great Bengal Famine 1943

One of the major factors that had deeply induced guilt and eroded the legitimacy of the Raj was the Great Bengal Famine of 1943. The Famine Commission had put their estimate at 1,873,749 dead. A rather neat and tidy figure that was actually far off the estimate of 3.5 million put out by The

Statesman newspaper and other sources. It had shaken the legitimacy of British Rule beyond belief and induced a full blown guilt complex. Linlithgow, the Viceroy, had made dutiful trips to Bombay and Madras but stayed away from Calcutta, where the starving Indians were coming in droves to die. This could no longer be hidden from the people of India. Stephen of The Statesman had written, "the famine had been a calamity which in sheer size exceeded any during the entire span of British Imperial Rule." He called it an "All India-disgrace".

This disgrace would prove to be costly. It was showing in the frenzied public outrage triggered by the INA trials, which the Congress leadership, now simply pushed and propelled by the masses, was trying to assume leadership of. The fact is, the extent of public outrage was so sweeping, that they had little choice. Stephen, then the Editor of The Statesman,wrote that a friend of his known for his wide contacts with the Indians had stated that if a Japanese plane had parachuted Bose on the Maidan in Calcutta next morning, 90 percent of the city's Bengali inhabitants would rush forth to join him. His words were to prove prophetic. Bose did not come, but his ghost was soon stalking the ramparts of the Red Fort and had mobilised millions of Indians all over the country.

Despite Japan's defeat, writes Ranjan Bora, and the consequent withering away of the INA on the India-Burma Front, both Subhash Chandra and his INA had become household names throughout the country as the returning soldiers were sought to be prosecuted by the British. By then the Nehru-Gandhi leadership had largely shot its bolt and even after the release of its leaders from prison, the year 1945 seemed calm and uneventful. That was till the INA trials began. The British made a massive error in their information warfare offensive. In trying to demonise Bose and his INA, they uncorked the information Genie from the bottle (where it had been so carefully hidden so far from public gaze and scrutiny). "Netaji and his legend", writes Bora, "now worked up a movement all over the country, which even a charismatic Gandhi had never been able to produce." Echoing this mass upsurge, Michael Edwards wrote in his book, *Last Years of British India*, "The Government of India had hoped by prosecuting members of the INA to reinforce the morale of the Indian Army." It had backfired very badly. Edward continues"It succeeded in creating unease, in making the Indian soldiers somewhat ashamed that they themselves had supported the British. If Bose and his men had been on the right side and all India now confirmed that they were, then Indians in the Army must have been on the wrong side.

It slowly dawned upon the Government of India, that the backbone of the British Rule, the Indian Army, might no longer be trustworthy. The Ghost of Subhash Bose, like Hamlet's father, now walked the battlements of the Red Fort (where the INA Officers were being tried) and his suddenly amplified figure overawed the conferences that were to lead to Independence." There were British comments of surprise at the virulence of Pandit Nehru's public speeches about the INA trials. He seemed to be saying something else in private to his British interlocutors, and quite another in public gatherings. He had little choice. A storm was gathering in India.

British Decision Making

It would be very instructive at this stage to monitor the confabulations that were taking place backstage in Delhi and London. There was an intense debate raging about the future of India, the Crown Jewel of the British Empire. Let us pause to put events in a historical perspective.

On July 26 1945, in a significant paradox as it were, Churchill, the celebrated British war leader, lost the elections at the peak of his fame and power. He had successfully led the British in a six year long war. Just when the final triumph came, a war-weary population showed him the door. The British people were physically, emotionally and psychologically drained by that war. As a consequence they showed their most celebrated and charismatic leader, Winston Churchill, the door. On July 26, Churchill, conceding defeat in the general elections, advised the King to ask Atlee to form a Government. Early in August, Atlee had taken charge.

Nehru had written in his prison diary about this monumental change, "Winston Churchill, I consider an honourable enemy. He is implacable but he obviously has fine qualities. One knows where he is. But what is one to do with the humbugs of the British Labour Party, weak, ineffective, pedestrian and significantly ignorant?" (Peter W. Fay, *The Forgotten Army*, p.430.) This was Nehru's view of the monumental change that had occurred, the tectonic shift of plates in London, from implacable Imperialists to a more decent set of leaders. The worst person in the Atlee Cabinet, Nehru felt was Sir Stafford Cripps. Early in 1942, Cripps had brought Indians an offer (the famous Cripps Offer) of Dominion Status at the end of the war and participation in an All-India Government meanwhile. *Subsequent negotiations had failed over defence.* The British had insisted that defence remain their

responsibility. Cripps had publicly blamed the Congress Party for this failure.

Now the same Cripps was in Atlee's Cabinet. When Atlee had been officiating PM in the wartime coalition government for a while, he had on August 09, 1942, approved the arrests and proscription of the Congress Party. Thereafter Atlee's remarks had dwelled less on the necessity of bringing independence to the subcontinent than on the difficulty of doing so (Peter W. Fay, *The Forgotten Army*, p.430). Nehru therefore was most suspicious and sceptical of Atlee. Early indications after formation of the new Labour Government were not encouraging. In his address to Parliament, George Vth had promised "to press on with the development of My Colonial Empire and the welfare of its people." That was the tone and tenor of the Atlee Government when it took charge in 1945. The Labour Party did not have a clear mandate for decisive change. Though the general elections had given it a majority of almost 150 seats in the House of Commons, at the polls it had received only 2 million more votes than the Conservatives. Atlee had won primarily on the basis of his domestic programme. In the realm of Colonial and Foreign Policy, Labour would be more conservative than the Conservatives themselves.

I am recounting this specifically, to fault the thesis of the Court Historians, that because of the continual non-violent struggle of the Congress over the past several decades, a kind of momentum towards freedom had been built up and what was germane or critical, was simply the process of protracted negotiations, which Gandhi and Nehru seemed to lead. This is very far from the truth. The Congress Party's last charge, the Quit India Movement of 1942 had unfortunately petered out completely. The British had totally weathered this storm and they felt they were on top of the situation. They were absolutely in no mood to make any concessions/compromises about India's freedom.

On August 13, 1945, Japan had surrendered. The provincial governments declared two to three days of holiday. The most joyous however, were the Americans and British servicemen, eager to go home. War weariness was the primary sentiment. On August 23, 1945, the Domei News Agency of Japan announced the death of Bose in an air crash. Picked up instantly, it had created a stir right across the subcontinent. Schools closed, markets shut in Bombay, the cotton mills stopped working in Ahmedabad, there was a general '*Hartal*', writes Fay.

Atlee meanwhile, had selected Pethick Lawrence as his Secretary of State for India. He was old, amiable and did not rub Indians the wrong way. Lord Wavell was immensely relieved. With the surrender of Japan, normal political life in the subcontinent could not be postponed indefinitely. The sudden surrender of Japan forced the issue by depriving Delhi of the postponement rationale. Hence on August 21, 1945, Wavell had given notice for the Central and Provincial elections, the first since 1937. On August 22, the Congress Party's proscription ended, to enable it to participate in these elections. The party was in disarray, as it had to now collect its workers and reopen its offices. It needed an issue to galvanise itself and the Indian masses. The issue was provided by Bose and his INA. It was a terrific opportunity with which to beat the British with. It put life back into a virtually moribund Congress. It was the ghost of Bose who rejuvenated the Congress and the Freedom Struggle. R. F. Mudie, the Home Member of Viceroy's Executive Council had written about Bose, "The Bengali's influence over the INA was substantial. It affects all races, castes and communities. Men admired him for organising India's First 'National Army' and for so conducting himself and that the Japanese were forced to treat Indians as allies. In the eyes of many, he stood on a level with Gandhi."

Nehru had initially opposed the launch of the 1942 Quit India Movement (as had most CWC members). They had virtually been bulldozed by Gandhi into launching this crusade. The simple fact is that *by then the views of Bose and Gandhi had begun to coincide markedly. Gandhi realised in retrospect, that Bose had been absolutely right.* This was India's last and desperate chance to attain freedom. It was now or never. It was 'Do or Die'. The Congress Party had thereafter launched its final non-violent crusade. The British had used unabashed violence to crush this popular uprising. To avoid any chances of peaceful agitations, they had used five divisions or 57 Battalions of white troops. That had crushed the Quit India Movement. This last charge had left the Mahatma psychologically exhausted and spent. He almost died in prison. This was perhaps when the British worked on Nehru in prison. When they released him, they were sure he was going to be reasonable. After all, he had initially opposed the launch of the Quit India Movement during the war and he had threatened to march against Bose if he invaded India along with the Japanese. He was perhaps the most anglicised of all Indian leaders.

Out of jail, Nehru and the Congress were soon pushed by the rising tide of anger and angst over the death of Netaji and the trials of the INA. A storm was rising all over India and the Congress leaders including Nehru were simply lifted by this rising tide of resentment and anger. The return of the INA prisoners had started in July 1945 itself. After the war ended, this process was speeded up. The British were making a serious mistake. In hindsight, they could have decided to leave them in Burma and Malaya. But they brought them back in shiploads to Chittagong and Calcutta. From here they were sent to camps in Jhingugacha and Nilganj (near Calcutta), to Kukee (outside Pune) and Bahadurgarh (close to Delhi), to Attock and Multan in the Punjab (now in Pakistan). At Bahadurgarh, the men of the Indische Legion were brought in. "Blacks" and those required to depose against them were concentrated in the Red Fort in Delhi.

By early Sep 1945, about 7,000 INA men had reached India. By early November this had risen to 12,000. About 3,000 had been allowed to rejoin their families. By December 1945 releases were averaging more than 600 a week. The INA men were getting reinjected into the national bloodstream. Stories of their glorious struggles were now proliferating all across the land, along with much embellishment. The INA POW cages were arousing public curiosity and anger. "These thousands, spreading all over the country", said Nehru to Krishna Menon, "will make a difference, perhaps a great difference, for they are hard as nails and very anti-British." Events were building up for a repeat of 1857.

1946, The Second Armed Rebellion

Every child in India is aware of the Uprising of 1857, termed as the First War of Independence. Very few historians also, are truly aware of the Military Revolt of 1946 which ultimately got India her freedom. This gathering thunderstorm had finally broken out in February 1946. Curiously it had erupted first in the Royal Air Force stations in India. There was unrest and near mutiny amongst the British airmen who were restive and desperate to go back home. Six years of the war had drained the "will to empire" amongst the British people and the armed forces. Just 5 months after World War II got over, in January 1946 to be precise, 2000 British airmen at the RAF bases in Bamhrauli, Allahabad, in India, went on strike. The war had ended and downsizing was going on and they felt insecure, as with their limited qualifications, no jobs would be available back home in England. Some just

wanted to go back to England, as they had not seen their families for around 5 years. This strike was quickly followed by the 2,100 airmen at at Mauripur, Karachi and 1,200 airmen at Dum Dum, Calcutta airfield,1,200 men stopped work. Soon 4,000 airmen at Seletar, Singapore, held massive parades to demand the presence of the Supreme Allied Commander South East Asia. The strike then spread to Kanpur, Palam (Delhi), Poona, Vizagapatam, Allahabad, Dum Dum, Kallang, Seletar, Chakulia, Lahore and Negombo. The pathetic and plummeting state of morale in the British rank and file must have alarmed the British leadership. Worse was to follow.

Indian naval ratings march for freedom

Royal Indian Navy Revolt

The INA trials had inflamed the Indian soldiers, sailors and airmen of the British Indian Armed Forces. The first to revolt were the sailors of the Royal Indian Navy. It was a massive and widespread rebellion. At its peak, about

20,000 sailors on board 78 ships and 20 shore establishments had revolted. They had pulled down the Union Jack and hoisted in its stead, the Tricolour Congress Flag. They had refused to obey their British officers, chased them out and manhandled them. They had marched through the streets of Mumbai and Karachi with portraits of Netaji, shouting the INA slogans of 'Jai Hind' and 'Chalo Dilli'. The revolt had occurred first in the Royal Indian Navy, an All India, All-Class Service. It spread next to the Royal Indian Air Force (also all-Indian all-class based). Mostly it was the signallers who could communicate with diverse units, who spearheaded this agitation. They had spread on wireless the news of the INA trials and generally coordinated the revolt. The British were petrified. This was the spectre that had been haunting them so far, of a dam about to burst.

It had burst now into the open. However, so far, it was confined to the Technical arms and services of the Royal Indian Navy and Royal Indian Air Force. Would it spread to the Indian Army, to its hitherto loyal martial-class units of Punjabi Mussalmans, Sikhs, Jats, Ahirs, Dogras, Kumaonis, Garhwalis and Gurkhas? By end February 1946, the revolt had spread to the Indian Army. The Signal and EME personnel at Jabalpur joined the fast spreading rebellion. The revolt had spread to the Indian Army and it was all over for the Raj. Let us now see these momentous events in some greater detail.

Men of Royal Indian Navy

Petty Officer Madan Singh

Unprecedentedly, the INA trials were very public, to strike terror into the hearts of the armed forces. Due to the sympathy toward Netaji and the INA in general, there was an instant and large outpouring of passion and patriotism in Indians. These stories were being shared via wireless sets and through media in general on the ships, where the sailors who were

discriminated against, got inspired to revolt. The British claimed that the causes were entirely local and hygine factors based, ie, the bad quality of food, the thinness of the dal and bad accommodation etc. That however was just the tip of the iceberg of anger and humiliation at racial slurs. Just as the greased cartridges were not the real reason but merely the precipitating causes of the 1857 uprising , food etc seemed to be the triggering cause of the 1946 revolt. But it had been brewing for long and could be traced back to the resentment born of the INA trials.

The world war was finally over for good, the massive mobilised forces were being rapidly downsized, aviators, sailors and soldiers were being demobilised. Though there was a programme to re-train men for civilian life, it was so symbolic so as to be meaningless. Coupled with the fact that most of the British Officers actually running the show (de-mob programme) were reservists, not careerists and they just could not connect with the men under them, the men simply had no respect for them.

The Royal Indian Navy revolt started on February 18, 1946, when 1,100 Naval ratings of ship HMIS Talwar struck work at Bombay at dawn. The following day the strike spread to 24 ships in Bombay harbour. There was rioting in Bombay City. Three Indians were killed and there were 32 Indian and British casualties. After the outbreak of the mutiny, the first planned move was to take possession of Butcher Island (where the entire ammunition meant for Bombay Presidency was stocked) and telephone and wireless equipment, including transmitters at Kirki near Pune. This ensured that all naval ships were fully under their command. The Indian Naval Officers and ratings began calling themselves the “Indian National Navy” , offered left-handed salutes to British Officers and generally refused to obey them. The news of the mutiny was communicated by signallers and soon at Karachi the HMIS Hindustan along with one more ship and three shore establishments, went on a lightning strike. There were artillery duels between the Indians and the British and the strikes took on the full blown form of a mutiny. Four Indian ratings were killed on HMIS Hindustan and 26 were injured. The strikes spread like wild fire to military establishments in Madras, Vishakhapatnam, Calcutta, Delhi, Cochin, Jamnagar, the Andamans, Bahrain and Aden. By February 21 most of the Navys’ 75 Naval Ships and 20 shore Naval Establishments, involving 20,000 Navy ratings were affected. These were either in a state of strike or in a state of mutiny. British men and women going in cars and Victorias 203s horse carriages in

Mumbai and Karachi were made to get down, remove their hats, and shout the INA slogan "Jai Hind" (Victory to India). Meanwhile the Navy's big guns were trained on the Taj Mahal Hotel, the Yacht Club and other British frequented buildings from morning till evening. Two Naval Ships were even cast off from the quay without British/ Indian Officers and Engineers, taken for a joy ride and anchored. Amazingly, this was done by ratings alone, and they did not have GPS or know how to use a sextant.

Even the ever loyal Gurkhas had refused to fire on striking sailors.

Unlike the Army and Air Force peaceful strikes, this was a full blown mutiny. From the initial flashpoint in the signalman training ship Talwar, at Bombay, the revolt had spread and found support throughout British India, from Karachi to Calcutta and ultimately involved 78 ships, 20 shore establishments and 20,000 sailors.

On February 20 and 21, The Navy men had given a call for a general strike which evoked tremendous public response. It was perceived as a challenge to the Queen's authority. Widespread rioting took place from Karachi to Calcutta, as the police did NOT report for work. In Karachi, revolt broke out on board the Royal Indian Navy ship, HMIS Hindustan off Manora Island. The ship, as well as shore establishments, were taken over by mutineers. Later, it had spread to the HMIS Bahadur. The next day, ratings from Castle and Fort Barracks in Bombay, joined in the revolt when rumours spread that HMIS Talwar's ratings had been fired upon. Several Indian low ranking Naval Officers who opposed the strike and sided with the British were thrown off the ship by ratings. Soon, the mutineer ratings were joined by thousands of disgruntled naval ratings from Bombay, Karachi, Cochin and Vizag. Communication between the various mutinies was maintained through the wireless communication sets available in HMIS Talwar. Thus, the entire revolt was coordinated in a marvellous manner. The strike initiated by the naval ratings soon took serious proportions. Hundreds of strikers from the sloops, minesweepers and shore establishments in Bombay demonstrated near VT. British personnel of the Defence Forces were singled out for attacks by the strikers who were armed with steel rods, hammers and even hockey sticks.

The White Ensign was lowered and discarded from the ships. Passions spilt over. The naval canteens were raided and expensive stuff like champagne, premium Black label scotch whisky, caviar, Dunhill cigarettes etc. meant only for the superior whites were distributed to the people. The

Navymen had the wireless system under their control. They were able to win over almost all the 78 ships and all the 20 seashore establishments. They had secured control over the civilian telephone exchange, the cable network and, above all, over the transmission centre at Kirkee manned by the Navy, which was the channel of communication between the Indian Government and the British.

This caused extreme panic in New Delhi and London. With no Army, no Navy, no Air Force, and no communications, with police joining the strike it was something the British had never ever expected. Navies of Australia, Canada and other English speaking nations were summoned, to India on an emergency basis.

Forces were rapidly mobilised in other ports and military stations, RAF aircraft were readied to bomb these boys who had revolted. Admiral J.H. Godfrey, the Flag Officer Commanding the RIN, went on air with his order to "Submit or perish,"and another Jallianwalah Bagh type massacre threat was made. Unlike in 1857, the mutineers in the armed forces meanwhile got little support from the national leaders (not even covert) and were largely leaderless. On the morning of February 21, 1946 the white guards opened fire at the Indian ratings trying to escape from the castle Barracks and this transformed a peaceful mutiny into a violent armed uprising. By this time the Strike Committee shifted command to the RIN flagship Narba. The ratings in Calcutta, Madras, Karachi Vizag and other Naval Centres, also went on strike with the slogans *"Strike for Bombay", "Release 11,000 INA prisoners" and "Jai Hind"*. After regiments of the British Army were deployed against the civilians in Bombay on February 22 and 23 1946, the number of people killed rose above 300. Most of this happened when British tanks tried

to smash through the barricades put up by civilians. Hundreds were killed, mostly civilian. Besides, there were some casualties even among the Indian sailors as a result of an exchange of fire between Indians and white British troops. All rebel ships manned guns, raised steam and began to hoot on the ship's whistle their intention of defending their comrades on shore. The sheer noise which could be heard for miles around, unnerved all the British residents. All this was hushed up.

Good sense prevailed finally. The British now used Congress leaders like Nehru and Patel to pacify these angry young sailors. Gandhiji himself was caught by total surprise by this unplanned revolt and he chided these men. An annoyed Sardar Vallabhai Patel summoned the ring leader Petty Officer Telegraphist Madan Singh in a flat at Bombay and literally shouted at him and demanded that he stop the mutiny. When this cut no ice, Jawaharlal Nehru called Madan to his brother-in-law Huthee Singh's flat and tried sweet talk and cajoling. Nehru said sympathetically"Agar main bhi aap ki jagah hota to main bhi jazbaat mein beh jaata". (If I had been in your place I would also have been swept away by sentiments). Nehru assured him that there would be no victimisation, if the mutiny is stopped and the men surrendered. Madan made it clear that the Navy would surrender only to Indian national leaders and not to the British authorities. Despite Nehru's assurances, hundreds of Navy ratings were dismissed on the spot. Patel issued a statement calling on the strikers to end their action, which was later echoed by a statement issued in Calcutta by Mohammed Ali Jinnah on behalf of the Muslim League. Under these considerable psychological pressures the strikers gave way. British Air Force Planes were making a show of strength with low flights. Their naval ships from Ceylon manned with Canadians, Australians and New Zealanders arrived at the Gate way of Bombay. But this was a mutiny that had received unprecedented and passionate public support. Even the burhka-clad women of Bhendi Bazaar and Dongri, joined in the agitation, throwing hot water and pans, from the roof tops, at the white British soldiers who were called out to patrol the streets for a show of strength. These same women showered flowers on the Indian muntineers and public who were resisting. BLPI members Prabhakar More and Lakshman Jadhav led 3 lakhs of unionised textile mill workers on strike. It was almost like the beginning of another 1857. The mutiny leaders had monopoly over the wireless communication sets and guns available in Mumbai and most other places. Thus, the entire revolt was coordinated. By

this time, all the armouries of the ships and establishments had been seized by the striking naval ratings. The deck and engine hands, stewards, cooks and wireless operators of the striking ship armed themselves with whatever weapon was available to resist the British destroyers that had sailed from Colombo and Trincomalee in Ceylon (Sri Lanka). In Madras and Pune, the Indians in British army garrisons went on strike.

The other navy rating members chosen in the mutiny leadership committee, were Leading Signaller Bedi Basant Singh, S.C. Sen Gupta, Chief Petty Officer, School Master Nawaz, Leading Seaman Ashraf Khan, Able Stoker Gomez and Mohammad Hussain. Hindu-Muslim unity was on show prominently.

The situation was changing fast and rumours spread that white Australian and Canadian armed battalions had been stationed outside the Lion Gate and the Gun Gate to encircle the dockyard where most ships were berthed. The ratings marched in a procession and passed through the streets of Manora, shouting anti-British slogans. They were joined by the inhabitants of Manora. When the ratings in boats moved towards the ship Hindustan, the General of the Army sent two platoons of Baluch soldiers to suppress the revolt. When the Baluch refused to fire upon their brothers, the British authorities got panicky. Then the White troops were summoned and Hindustan was surrounded from all sides. The British troops started firing and the ratings on Hindustan retaliated. The firing and attacks and counter-attacks continued for four hours. Six of the ratings were killed, more than 30 were wounded. Karachi witnessed complete *hartal* (strike). More than 35,000 people, Hindus and Muslims, gathered at Idgah defying Section 144 which was imposed by the authorities. To disperse the crowd, the police resorted to firing. More than 50 were wounded. On the call of the CPI, 120,000 people at Calcutta joined the strike. There was a clear Communist element in the strike. It continued till the February 25, 1946, when the British with European forces surrounded the ratings. Many were killed and wounded. Almost all Indian cities witnessed hartals.

This unfortunately, was the time that the Congress and other political leaders totally ditched these men. The political parties joined the British in helping to quell this uprising. The Congreess leaderhip had intervened to derail the start of an armed uprising to throw the British out. The Congress wanted to undo precisely what Bose and his INA had worked so hard for instigating an armed uprising in the Indian soldiery and throw out the

British with armed force. Another Jallianwalah Bagh by the British using foreign white troops, could have sparked off a very major and violent conflagration that would have spelt the end of the Raj. The politicians calculated shrewdly that the pressure of the INA trials and these mutinies would force the British to leave anyway. An armed violent overthrow of the British, at this delicate juncture might deny them the fruits of power for which they had striven so far. So they prevailed upon the strike leaders to sketch this major and fast brewing revolt.

Due to lack of political support, they agreed to give up their struggle. The negotiations moved fast, keeping in view the extreme sensitivity of the situation and on the fourth day i.e, February 22, 1946, most of the demands of the strikers were conceded in principle. On February 23, leading seaman M. S. Khan, President of the Naval Central Strike Committee, announced: "Our strike has been a historic event in the life of our nation. For the first time the blood of the men in the services and the people flowed together for a common cause. We will never forget this. *Jai Hind!*"

At 0600 hrs on February 24, 1946 white flags were raised from the decks of all ships to announce surrender. In its last session the strike committee passed a resolution which stated, "Our uprising was an important historical event in the lives of our people. For the first time the blood of uniformed and non-uniformed workers flowed in one current for the same collective cause." The British hushed up the whole incident and destroyed all records, as per orders from England. Despite assurances from Nehru and Jinnah widespread arrests were made by the British. Madan Singh himself was placed in solitary confinement for three and a half months. There were several unilateral Court Martials. None of those dismissed were reinstated into service either in the Indian or Pakistani Navies after independence. 52 years later a naval ship was named as 'INS Madan Singh', after the mutiny leader by the Navy of free India. Another ship was named after instead of for former leading telegraphist B.C. Dutt also.

Here was an armed revolution in the making that could have forced the British to depart lock stock and barrel. The Congress however opted to stop this violent revolt. They wanted a peaceful transfer of power to themselves, with all the instruments of the Raj that they were familiar with intact. The British heaved a sigh of relief. This could have turned rather messy and ugly. But the writing was now on the wall.

Auchinlek now warned his Army commanders that they could no longer rely on the soldiers of the Indian Army. He warned the Government in London to hastily announce a date for the British departure. Both the soldiers, Wavell and Auchinlek were now crystal clear it was all over for the Raj. The sheet anchor for its continuance, its very centre of gravity, was the loyalty of the Indian sepoy to the Raj. With this in serious doubt now, they were clear that it was curtains for the Empire. Did they want to go with grace or did they want a very messy and bloody exit? For this time the Congress leaders had been able to bail them out. The key question was, for how long?

RIAF Revolt

Just twelve days before the Indian Navy Mutiny (which started on February 18, 1946), 600 members, including officers of the Royal Indian Air Force (RIAF) camp situated close by on Bombay Marine Drive had gone on a hunger strike as a protest against a racial insult by the Camp Commander. The revolt in the Navy soon spread to the ranks of the Royal Indian Air Force. Indian airmen at many air bases went on strike. They too refused to obey their British officers and shouted pro-INA slogans in Karachi and other cities.

Jabalpur Army Mutiny

The last straw that broke the camels back however was the spread of this armed revolt finally to the Indian Army, the real source of the strength of the Raj in India. On the quiet morning of February 26, 1946, as an aftermath of the naval mutiny, about 120 army men of the 'J' company of the Signals Training Centre (STC), Jabalpur, defied their British superiors and broke free from their barracks,. Part of a radio signalling unit, they were sick and tired of the racist abuse heaped on them by their paranoid British counterparts. There was complete commotion for some days.

The ranks of the mutineers swelled to 1,700 men, armed with nothing more than Congress and Muslim League flags. Shouting slogans, the patriotic mutineers protested peacefully for some days. This peaceful protest by soldiers who could well have used their arms, was a serious error of judgement. The British ordered a white Somerset Light Infantry battalion to mount a vicious bayonet charge which killed 8 protest leaders (and caused bad wounds to 32 more). This brutal charge brought the mutiny to a sad

end. Eighty men behind the mutiny were court-marshalled and dismissed without pay and pension. Forty-one others were sent to prison. But the incident was quickly hushed up. All that the mutineers of Jabalpur received for their efforts was a vicious bayonet charge, rigorous imprisonment and dismissal without benefits. Even today we find old and desperately poor Jabalpur army men inquiring on the Internet, if it is possible to get a pension.

The Jabalpur mutiny however had the British now seriously worried about what they had taken for granted,—the British Indian Army's loyalty. In sharp contrast, the naval ratings who mutinied just days ahead of the Jabalpur mutiny were later recognised as freedom fighters as they had listened to the advice of the Congress leaders and given up their armed struggle which could have led to a great deal of violence as the Naval ratings were prepared to fight it out and had trained their ship guns on the sectors where the British officers and civilian officials lived. The guns incidentally had also been laid on the Taj Hotel. Ironically, the naval mutineers were also radio men just like the ones in Jabalpur. So why did the British hush up the Jabalpur army men's mutiny? They obviously feared serious trouble if the news of the revolt spread to other army units across British India. That was their ultimate nightmare. What had shaken them so much was the Hindu Muslim unity displayed in these revolts. They set about with a will to destroy that by instigating large scale Hindu Muslim riots all over India. This was the time they seriously began to consider the option of partition.

Meanwhile Lord Pethik Lawrence made a momentous declaration in the House of Lords on February 19, 1946 in which he announced the decision of the British government to send a special mission, consisting of himself, Sir Stratford Cripps and A.V. Alexander to resolve the constitutional dead-lock in India. This was the beginning of the end, the first nail in the coffin of the empire. Meanwhile British General Staff had begun serious planning for coping with wider mutinies and unrest in the army. Some of the declassified documents of The Briish Indian Army of that period make chilling reading. Sample these:

"If however, the Indian Armed Forces did not remain loyal… we would be faced with the necessity of providing five British divisions for India, with the consequent abandonment of commitments in other areas hitherto regarded as inescapable, serious effects on our import and export programmes and world-wide repercussions on the release scheme. The only

alternative to this would be ignominious withdrawal from the whole of India. Five British divisions incidentally were just not available. Most divisions were being hurriedly shipped back home because the soldiers were desperately homesick."

The Report by the Chiefs of Staff is an important document that brings to light several important points connected with India's Independence. It clearly brings out the fact that the British Government was seriously considering the option of creating Pakistan in June 1946, not because of the lack of agreement with the political parties – this was still being negotiated by the Cabinet Mission–but due to the threat of disaffection in the Indian Armed Forces. This option was ruled out only because it did not serve British strategic interests. The disparity in the outlook of British officials in London and Delhi is also clearly visible, for the former, Britain's long term strategic interest dictated continuation of British rule, while those closer to the scene of action, such as Wavell and Auchinleck, realised that it was time to go. Had the Indian armed forces remained loyal or there had been enough British divisions to keep them in check, the British would never have left India.

Early in September 1946 the Viceroy forwarded to London a plan for phased withdrawal from India, which was a revised version of the Breakdown Plan of the Cabinet Mission. This had been rejected by the British Government as it did not help British strategic interests. Wavell could see that the situation was steadily deteriorating and unless a clear policy was announced, India could slide into anarchy. After consulting the Governors and the C-in-C, he estimated that the British could hold on for not more than 18 months. The Secretary of State, Lord Pethick Lawrence, did not agree with Wavell's appreciation. He felt that it was still possible to hold on to India, and proposed further European recruitment to augment British troops in India. By this time, serious communal riots had broken out in East Bengal and in the Punjab, resulting in sizeable casualties among Hindus as well as Muslims. A new Interim Government headed by Jawaharlal Nehru had been installed in Delhi, with Sardar Baldev Singh as the Defence Member. In a letter dated 12 September to Auchineleck, who had recently been appointed a Field Marshal, Nehru discussed the withdrawal of British forces from India, pulling out Indian troops from the Netherlands East Indies and Iraq and the future of the Indian Army. In a broadcast to the Armed Forces on 9 October Baldev Singh announced the setting up of a

committee to accelerate the pace of nationalization. In view of these developments, Pethick-Lawrence's proposal to raise additional European troops for India appeared surreal.

Refusing to take no for an answer, Wavell sent a strongly worded note to the Secretary of State on October 23, in which he reiterated his demand for a firm declaration of the policy of the British Government. His plan, he wrote, was based on two main assumptions:

- The object was to transfer power to India without undue delay and with the minimum of disorder and bloodshed, to secure the interests of the Minorities and to provide for the safety of the 90,000 Europeans in India.
- The power of the British Government in India was weakening daily, and could not be sustained beyond 18 months. Using exceptionally strong language, Wavell made it clear that as the man on the spot, it was his responsibility to advise the Government of the action to be taken to achieve these objects. 'If the H.M.G. consider that my advice shows lack of balance and judgment, or that I have lost my nerve, it is of course their duty to inform me of this and to replace me', he wrote. 'But they take a very grave responsibility upon themselves if they simply neglect my advice.' Wavell ended by emphasizing that they 'must have an emergency plan in readiness, and if it is agreed that we cannot hope to control events for longer than 18 months from now, we shall have to make up our minds and make a definite pronouncement at least in the first half of 1947. While I agree that we should not leave India till we have exhausted every possible means of securing a constitutional settlement, we can make no contribution to a settlement once we have lost all power of control'.

In December 1946 the British Government invited Nehru, Baldev Singh, Jinnah and Liaqat Ali Khan to London for discussions, along with the Viceroy. During his visit, Wavell again pressed for adoption of the Breakdown Plan, urging the Government to announce that they would withdraw all control from India by March 1948. Some Cabinet Ministers such as Bevin and Alexander, who were imperialists at heart, balked at the prospect of a stark announcement of the ending of the British Raj. Prime Minister Attlee also felt strongly that the British should not relinquish

control until at least a constitutional settlement had been reached. Since the chances of reaching an amicable settlement appeared dismal, Attlee's views seemed illusory. After a series of meetings, the India and Burma Committee decided to recommend that March 31, 1948 should be announced as the date by which the British would hand over power in India. Wavell pressed for a firm announcement in this regard by the British Government. Attlee replied to Wavell on December 21, 1946, giving the impression that his proposal had been by and large accepted. In fact, three days earlier, Attlee had offered Mountbatten the post of Viceroy in replacement of Wavell.

Retaining the Andamans

Moutnbatten reached India on March 22, 1947. Before he left London, he had been told that India would be granted Independence by June 1948, i.e. after 15 months, this was exactly what Wavell had been demanding for the last two years. On May 23, 1947 the British Cabinet approved, in principle, a draft Partition Plan, which was to be implemented in case of a failure to secure a final compromise. After consulting Indian political leaders, Mountbatten announced on June 3, 1947 that India would become independent on August 15, 1947. A few days later Mountbatten received the draft Indian Independence Bill, and was surprised to find that the British Government intended to retain the Andaman Islands, which were not being regarded as a part of British India. It transpired that Britain was planning to make the Andamans a British Settlement. The recommendation to retain the islands had come from the British Chiefs of Staff, due to their strategic location in the Bay of Bengal, covering the sea routes to the East. Mountbatten strongly opposed the plan, informing London that any attempt 'to claim the Andaman Islands as colonies, to be treated in the same way as Aden, will cause an absolute flare-up throughout the length and breadth of India.' In view of Mountbatten's strong opposition, the British Government decided to drop the proposal.

The crucial role of the Indian Armed Forces, especially the Indian Army, in the British decision to quit India has been commented on by several writers and historians. Captain Shahid Hamid, who was the Private Secretary to General Auchinleck, made the following entry in his diary on March 30, 1946: 'Today the *Hindustan Times* commented editorially on the Auk's appeal to the Indian Army. "There is no doubt whatever that if the

transfer of power is not quickly brought about, the foreign rulers of India cannot count upon the loyalty of the Indian Army's."

The well known historian, Dr. Tara Chand, has written: 'The most controversial measure of the Viceroy was the decision to advance the date of transfer of power from June 1948 to August 15, 1947. On this issue Mountbatten recorded his reasons in his conclusions appended to the Report on the Last Viceroyalty submitted to His Majesty's Government in September 1948. His defence for expediting the transference of power to the Indians was on these lines… "Secondly, the ultimate sanction of law and order, namely, the Army, presented difficulties for use as an instrument of government for maintenance of peace…'

Mangat Rai, a colleague of Penderel Moon in the Indian Civil Service before Independence, wrote an appreciation of the latter's book *The British Conquest and Dominion of India.* Commenting on the role of the Indian Army he writes:

How far were the competence and size of the Indian army factors in persuading the British to contemplate withdrawal from India, and in the final decision? In general Moon has consistent praise both for the sepoy regiments of the Company and for the Indian army's contribution in two world wars. He notes that at the end of the Second World War, the army comprised two and a half million, in place of the 190,000 at the start. The army's record was brilliant marred only by the defection of comparatively small numbers to the Japanese –promoted INA. With an army of Indians of this calibre and size, would it have been practical to continue to govern India under British control?

Charles Raikes, a British Civil servant of the Mutiny days, had bluntly asserted that the British 'should legislate and govern India as the superior race', adding with some prescience, 'whenever that superiority ceases, our right to remain in India terminates also'. This was in line with the view held by most Britons, who felt that British rule was a blessing for India. By the time World War II ended, the USA had assumed the mantle of the leader of the developed world, and her democratic principles of equality began to be embraced by other nations in the West. From the mutiny onwards, Indians had steadily acquired knowledge and skills that they had previously lacked, closing the gap between them and the British. According to Sir Penderel Moon, 'One noteworthy, but not often mentioned, example of change was the ending of the superiority of British to Indian troops, which had been a

factor in the Company's original conquest of India. By 1943 Indian Divisions, in the opinion of Field Marshal Sir William Slim, were among the best in the world and divisional commanders on the Burma front called for Indian rather than British battalions. Thus Charles Raikes, if he had still been alive, would probably have felt obliged to admit that on his own premises the time had come for British withdrawal.'

It is interesting to reflect on the course of history if the Indian soldier had not been affected by nationalistic feelings and continued to serve loyally as he had during and before World War II. Though the freedom movement had developed considerable momentum by the time the war ended, the assumption that it would have achieved Independence on its own would be erroneous. With the vast resources at their disposal, it would not have been difficult for the British authorities in India to muzzle the movement, as they had done in 1930 and 1942. The only reason for them not being able to resort to such measures after 1945 was the uncertain dependability of the Army. Had the Indian soldier remained staunch, or adequate British forces been available, it is most unlikely that freedom would have come in 1947. If nothing else, it would have been delayed by 10-15 years. If this had happened, perhaps India would not have been partitioned, the Kashmir problem would not have existed, and the Indo-Pak wars of 1948, 1965 and 1971 would not have been fought. Who knows, with its large size, population and a long spell of peace unfettered by the threat of war, India would have been a World power, equalling or even surpassing China by the turn of the century.

The redoubtable Lt. Gen. Sinha was one of the first Indian officer to be posted at the most prestigious Military Operations (MO) Directorate in Delhi. This was hitherto manned only by British officers. The outgoing British officer he was taking charge from, handed over the keys of the Top secret documents to him and left, in a great hurry. Therein Gen. Sinha saw two Top Secret files meant for British officer only. One was a contingency plan to fly in British troops to deal with any mutiny in the Indian armed Forces. This called for flying in some five British divisions to quell such an uprising. The second was Operation Gandola, a plan to evacuate British civil and military personnel from India in the event of a major armed uprising. This gives the clearest insight into the state of mind of the British and the real reason why they left in such a tearing hurry in 1947. Lord Louise Mountbatten had taken over from Field Marshal Wavell as India's last

Viceroy and later its first Governor General. He had, rather arbitrarily and whimsically, advanced the date of British withdrawal from India from the earlier target date of June 1948 to August 15, 1947 simply because that happened to be the anniversary of his South East Asia Commands Victory over Japan. This led to the holocaust of partition in which 2.5 to 3 million of Indians and Pakistanis were killed and some 10 million were uprooted and displaced. It saw the most massive mass migrations in human history. Perhaps the underlying intention was to seed such chaos that the newly formed dominions would beg to be reincorporated back into the Empire.

Mountbatten went out of his way to befriend and influence Nehru. Nehru had gone to Singapore and was to lay a wreath at the INA War Memorial there. Mountbatten had persuaded him not to do so and later had that memorial dynamited and blown to smithereens. Later Mrs. Edwina Mountbatten came to exercise a great deal of influence over Nehru. It is rumoured that it was Earl Mountbatten who convinced Nehru that the INA personnel posed a threat to his leadership position, especially if Bose came back. He had therefore advised him not to take the INA people back into the Army. They were, in fact denied their war-time pensions till the Janta Government came to power in 1977.The simple fact however is that it was the INA of Bose and their trials and the mutinies they triggered in the Indian armed forces which had compelled the British to leave India in 1947. The senior leaders of the Congress (Nehru, Patel, Azad etc.) were ageing fast and somewhat desperate to get the fruits of their long struggle in the terms of power and pelf. This seemed their last chance and they caved in to British pressure on the issue of Partition. Meanwhile Mahatma Gandhi himself had been absolutely marginalised and sidelined from these negotiations for transfer of power. Unlike in Burma and later in Ceylone, the British did not call this Independence but Transfer of Power. On August 15, 1947, the Tricolour finally went up but the Union jack was not brought down.

The sun however, had set on the British Empire.

At the end of this book therefore, we come back to its beginning return to the seminal questions posed by Justice P.B. Chakraborthy (then the Governor of West Bengal), to Lord Clement Atlee, the former Prime Minister of Great Britain (who was instrumental in granting India her freedom). He was the key decision maker and therefore the primary source of information on the history of that epochal period. These seminal questions dealt with the issue of how did India get its freedom? Did we get it

because of the soft power of *Ahimsa*, *non-violence* and *Stayagraha*? Or was the use of force, the hard power employed by Netaji and his INA, instrumental in forcing the Britons to leave? These are seminal issues about the very how and why of nation state formation in India. Today, they deserve to be debated and discussed in detail. Where our nation state is headed depends a great deal on where we came from. How we came into being? What were the perspectives that shaped our outlook and institutions then? The simple fact is, that there has been an orchestrated attempt to falsify our recent history and impart to it a vicious spin. The entire role of Netaji Subhash Bose and his INA has been more or less erased from our history books which have been turned into hagiographies for a dynastic leadership. India is a democracy where we have seen the phenomenon of court historians deliberately distorting history. Bipin Chandra's book on India's Freedom Struggle is a magnum opus that runs into 600 pages. It devotes just one page and a half to Netaji and the INA.That is the level and extent of the deliberate distortions that are being injected into our study of the history of our freedom struggle.

During the war the British had completely blanked out all mention of the INA and Bose. After independence it was free India's Nehruvian dispensation that now did its best to black out all mention of Bose and his INA. They went the extra mile to prove the narrative of his death in an air crash. The real attempt unfortunately, was to kill the legacy of Bose and his INA, which was viewed as a great threat to the legitimacy of the Nehruvian leadership. Yet despite all efforts at blanket censorship, his legacy lives on. That by itself is a miracle. Bose's true legacy is simply the very freedom of India as a nation state. Without him it would just not have been possible.

Ranjan Bora in his eminently researched paper writes-"Ramesh Chandra Majumdar, the eminent Indian historian who passed away recently, and who by virtue of his challenges to several historical myths can rightly be called the Dean of new historians in India, observed in his book Three Phases of India's Struggle for Freedom:

"There is, however, no basis for the claim that the Civil Disobedience Movement directly led to Independence. The campaigns of Gandhi ... came to an ignoble end about fourteen years before India achieved independence ... During the First World War the Indian revolutionaries sought to take advantage of German help in the shape of war materials to free the country by armed revolt. But the attempt did not succeed. During the Second World

War, Subhas Bose followed the same method and created the INA. In spite of brilliant planning and initial success, the violent campaigns of Subhas Bose failed ... The Battles for India's freedom were also being fought against Britain, though indirectly, by Hitler in Europe and Japan in Asia. None of these scored direct success, but few would deny that it was the cumulative effect of all the three that brought freedom to India. In particular, the revelations made by the INA trial, and the reaction it produced in India, made it quite plain to the British, already exhausted by the war, that they could no longer depend upon the loyalty of the sepoys for maintaining their authority in India. This had probably the greatest influence upon their final decision to quit India."

Bora continues-"..apart from revisionist historians, it was none other than Lord Clement Atlee himself, the British Prime Minster responsible for conceding independence to India, who gave a shattering blow to the myth sought to be perpetuated by court historians, that Gandhi and his movement had led the country to freedom. Chief justice P.B. Chakrabarty of Calcutta High Court, who had also served as the acting Governor of West Bengal in India, disclosed the following in a letter addressed to the publisher of Dr. R.C. Majumdar's book A History of Bengal. The Chief Justice wrote:

You have fulfilled a noble task by persuading Dr. Majumdar to write this history of Bengal and publishing it ... In the preface of the book Dr. Majumdar has written that he could not accept the thesis that Indian independence was brought about solely, or predominantly by the non-violent civil disobedience movement of Gandhi. When I was the acting Governor, Lord Atlee, who had given us independence by withdrawing the British rule from India, spent two days in the Governor's palace at Calcutta during his tour of India. At that time I had a prolonged discussion with him regarding the real factors that had led the British to quit India. My direct question to him was that since Gandhi's "Quit India" movement had tapered off quite some time ago and in 1947 no such new compelling situation had arisen that would necessitate a hasty British departure, why did they have to leave? In his reply Atlee cited several reasons, the principal among them being the erosion of loyalty to the British Crown among the Indian Army and Navy personnel as a result of the military activities of Netaji. Toward the end of our discussion I asked Atlee what was the extent of Gandhi's influence upon the British decision to quit India. Hearing this question,

Atlee's lips became twisted in a sarcastic smile as he slowly chewed out the word, "m-i-n-i-m-a-l!"

Bora concludes "When the new version of the history of the Twentieth Century India, and especially the episode of the country's unique struggle for independence comes to be written, it will no doubt single out but one person who made the most significant and outstanding contribution among all his compatriots toward the emancipation of his motherland from the shackles of an alien bondage. During World War II this man strode across two continents like a colossus, and the footsteps of his army of liberation reverberated through the forests and plains of Europe and the jungles and mountains of Asia. His armed assaults shook the very foundations of the British Empire. His name was Subhas Chandra Bose."

This assesment is echoed by Dr. Balashib Ambedkar, the framer of India's Constitution and its first Law Minister. Babasaheb would not have been surprised with Sir Attlee's admission, for he had foreseen it. He told the BBC in 1955 that from his "own analysis" he had concluded that "two things led the Labour Party to take this decision" [to free India]. Ambedkar continued: "The national army that was raised by Subhas Chandra Bose. The British had been ruling the country in the firm belief that whatever may happen in the country or whatever the politicians do, they will never be able to change the loyalty of soldiers. That was one prop on which they were carrying on the administration. And that was completely dashed to pieces. They found that soldiers could be seduced to form a party, a battalion to blow off the British."

Bora writes-"This 'unimpeachable' truth will come as a shock to most Indians brought up to believe that the Congress movement driven by the 'spiritual force' of Mahatma Gandhi forced the British to leave India. But both the evidence and the logic of history are against this beautiful but childish fantasy; it was the fear of mutiny by the Indian armed forces-and not any 'spiritual force'-that forced the issue of freedom. The British saw that the sooner they left India the better for themselves, for, at the end of the war, India had some three million men under arms. Majumdar had reached the same conclusion years earlier, as far back as 1948 as he records. The most dramatic event after the end of World War II was the INA Trials at the Red Fort, not any movement by Gandhi or Nehru. This led directly to the mutiny of the naval ratings, which, more than anything, helped the British make up their minds to leave India in a hurry. They sensed that it was only a matter of

time before the spirit spread to other sections of the armed forces and the rest of the Government. None of this would have happened without Subhas Bose and the INA.

The crucial point to note is that thanks to Subhas Bose's activities and the INA, the Armed Forces began to see themselves as defenders of India rather than upholders of the British Empire. This alone more than anything else, was what led to India's freedom. This is also the reason why the British Empire disappeared from the face of the earth within an astonishingly short space of twenty years. Indian soldiers, who were the main prop of the Empire, were no longer willing to fight to hold the Empire together."

Sir Norman Smith, Director, Intelligence Bureau, noted in a secret report of November 1945: "The situation in respect of the Indian National Army is one which warrants disquiet. There has seldom been a matter which has attracted so much Indian public interest and, it is safe to say, sympathy… the threat to the security of the Indian Army is one which it would be unwise to ignore." Lt. General S.K. Sinha, former Governor of Jammu and Kashmir and Assam, one of the only three Indian officers posted in the Directorate of Military Operations in New Delhi in 1946, made this observation in 1976. "There was considerable sympathy for the INA within the Army… It is true that fears of another 1857 had begun to haunt the British in 1946."Agreeing with this contention were a number of British MPs who met British Prime Minister Clement Attlee in February 1946. "There are two alternative ways of meeting this common desire (a) that we should arrange to get out, (b) that we should wait to be driven out. In regard to (b), the loyalty of the Indian Army is open to question; the INA have become national heroes…"Even in his 'defeat', Netaji delivered a massive blow to the British rule in India. And then when India needed him most, he 'disappeared'.

In this concluding chapter therefore, I have tried to follow closely the chain of events that led Britain to grant freedom to India. The declassified documents of that period clearly highlight the fact that it was not the non-violent and peaceful struggle of the Congress that got India her freedom but rather the INA of Bose that had acted as the primary catalyst, by triggering mutinies in the British Indian Armed Forces in 1946. It was these revolts that dismayed the British and called into question the very loyalty of Indian troops to the empire. The loyalty of the Indian sepoy to the Raj had very correctly been identified as the very Centre of Gravity of the freedom struggle against the British rule in India by Netaji Subhash Bose. The INA

trials inflamed the people and soldiers of India. There were mass and violent protests all over the country. These were capped by the armed mutinies that broke out in the Armed forces in February 1946 and spelt the death knell of the empire.

Thus the INA may have lost the battles of Kohima and Imphal but they had won the war by freeing India. Yet, sadly, a whole host of non-violent pretenders (whose real impact on the British decision to leave had been minimal) stepped forth to claim victory. They assumed charge in Delhi and then launched a determined drive to erase Bose and the INA legacy from our historical records. To diminish and deny his stellar achievements, they manufactured a new National Narrative based on *Ahimsa* and non-violence. This alone, they incorrectly claimed, had got India her freedom and entry into the Westphalian system of nation states based on hard power. India, they claimed, had obtained her freedom based on soft power and hard power had no further role of consequence in the post-independence Indian polity. India's leadership began the process of the emasculation of its armed forces as legacies of the empire that were not needed in a non-violent future.

The Push to Pacifism

Have we pondered over one fact? At the end of World War II India had fielded the largest all volunteer army in the history of the world. At 2.5 million men what was significant was that this Army had been recruited without any conscription (like in Europe, America and USSR). This army had proved to be professionally robust and reliable. By 1943, British Senior Commanders had clearly started indicating their preference for Indian divisions and units over British military units that were showing clear signs of war- weariness and fatigue. Indian troops were hardy and Spartan, needed much less logistical support and were tenacious in combat. On both sides in Burma, it was primarily Indian troops who had performed very well in actual combat. The Britsih were rather keen to disarm India before they went away. They slashed the Indian Army by 85 percent to leave a rump force. They left behind a pacific regime that abhorred violence and hated the Armed forces with a venom and virulence that was surprising. Just like Japan had been pacified and turned into a toothless State after the Second World War. It was forced to adopt pacifism as state policy so that it would never threaten the USA or Europe ever again, similarly India was defanged before the British left. They demobilised the 2.5 million strong Indian Army

into a rump force of some 300,000 men that was then divided between India and Pakistan. Like Mao, Bose had wanted to have an INA that would be 3 million strong and a power to reckon with in Asia and the world. It is noteworthy that the PLA of China had reached a peak strength of a staggering 4.2 million men (after the Korean War). Post World War II, the USA had taken care to demilitarise Japan and impose a pacific Constitution on it to ensure it would never be a threat again to the USA. The British did better, they simply disbanded India's massive and combat hardened army of 2.5 million men after the War and left behind a set of rulers who had made a fetish out of pacifism (to try and gain legitimacy vis a vis Bose, a leader who had fought for India's freedom by violent means).To overcome his legacy of violence, they had gone overboard in trying to promote pacifism. Pandit Nehru hated the military and had in fact told the First British Chief of Independent India's Army, that he did not need armed forces in India, the police forces would suffice! The look of shock and incredulity on the British General (Sir Roy Buchers) face should have been preserved for posterity.

Very fortunately for India, the trauma of partition, the Pakistani invasion of Jammu and Kashmir and the need to liberate Hyderabad, underlined the inescapable need for military force in a Westphalian state system. Sardar Patel was a strong nationalist leader and a clear-headed realist who understood the need for the use of force in the affairs of state. It was Patel, who undid the unholy mosaic of princely states left behind by the British and made India a viable territorial entity in the Westphalian sense. Unfortunately for India, Patel died much too soon after independence.

Post-Patel, the Indian Nation state under Nehru turned with a redoubled vigour to establish a manufactured National Narrative of itself as an exceptional state based not on hard power but a soft power narrative of Ahimsa, moral force and persuasion as opposed to military coercion, compellence and actual use of hard power. India was now part of the Westphalian system of nation states premised upon hard power. India's contrived narrative however said it was a state with a huge difference. It was formed on the basis of soft power of *Satyagraha* which alone had driven out the British. Unfortunately, this was not based on historical facts. The British had left because of the military and hard power challenge of the INA and its ability to instigate armed rebellion amongst 2.5 million trained men of the demobilised British Indian Army. If these had rebelled in mass, the battle-weary British were simply in no state to deal with such a mass armed revolt

in India. The Ghost of the INA was capable of initiating precisely such an armed rebellion. That is what made the British quit. They felt they were perfectly capable of dealing with the non-violent movement. It was only the possibility of large scale violence by 2.5 million demobilised soldiers that impelled the British not to get bogged down in a military morass and cut their costs and leave, when they did.

Why is it so important today to debate how we got our freedom?

Simple, for that defines the kind of state we have become. *The Nehruvian narrative, tried strenuously to deny the use of force as a contributory factor for India's independence. It was trying to seek legitimacy for its rule by strenuously denying the legacy of Bose and his INA. In so doing it went to logical extremes to profess pacifism and non-use of force as a guiding credo of state behviour*. It gave primacy to Soft power and not hard power in building a nation state in India. India it said was a unique state that had gained its freedom by the soft power of *Ahimsa* and non-violence. This very central premise is seriously flawed. In fact, this was actually a contradiction in terms. The Modern Westphalian nation state system is based on the state's monopoly of violence or hard power. *To deny political legitimacy to Bose and his INA, Nehru went to inordinate lengths to profess pacifism as state policy. He went so far as to assert that India did not need Armed forces, only police forces would suffice*. He starved the armed forces of resources and subordinated the military leadership to a totally generalist bureaucracy that had absolutely no clue of military matters. He placed very excessive reliance on his Intelligence Chief to provide him national security related inputs. His first intelligence chief served him for 13 years at a stretch. The Armed forces professional advice was totally marginalised in the decision making process and the very workable security systems left behind by the British soon atrophied. The IB of India had been one of the most loyal and effective instruments of the Raj. It had destroyed the Ghadarite movement and thoroughly penetrated the INA. Its attitude to this very patriotic organisation was rather hostile. There are speculations now available that sections of this very powerful state organistaion remained loyal to the Raj and continued to share snooping reports on the Bose family with the British MI-5 for over two decades after independence. *Since intelligence agencies perforce have to work on a strictly compartmentalised and need to know basis, this culture at the apex severely eroded the normal synergy and coordination so essential between the various organs of the state and was specifically destructive of civil military synergy.*

Nehru, as his own Foreign Minister, now went into an overdrive to promote soft power as the sole panacea for all national and global ills. He saw himself as a global statesman destined to usher in peace on a planetary scale. As such, he was simply too big to be contained by the problems of a third world state like India. *The standoff between the two superpowers did provide a neutral space where India, with its soft power and peace narrative, could punch much above its actual weight. It is to Nehru's credit that he crafted this neutrality into a global movement called non-alignment. For some time, it gave inordinate influence at the global scale and inflated the soft power balloon of the Indian Republic to very dizzy heights.* After the unprecedented bloodletting of the Second World War, the planet was tired of conflict and not keen for a Third World War. Nehru and his soft power specialists in the Foreign Ministry plugged into this global fear of another Armageddon and presented themselves as the ultimate peacemakers of the planet.

Unfortunately, *this soft power construct, though very successful for a time at the global level, came to grief at the regional level.* China's Communist military leadership had little patience with Nehru's soft power pretensions. Soft power rhetoric is no substitute for the basic military power needed for national defence. This military power had been grievously neglected for well over 15 years. The military had deliberately been belittled and emasculated. Defence spending was tapered off to just about one percent of the GDP. When push came to shove in the Himlayas, the Chinese savagely punctured India's soft power balloon. They had carefully prepared the logistical support structure in Tibet to fight a war in the High Himayas. We had dismally failed to do that and like the INA in Burma, had to suffer the consequences. The Chinese humiliated India militarily. Despite all the soft power rhetoric, not even one nation came to India's rescue. The West only made token noises and then tried to arm-twist India into giving Jammu and Kashmir to Pakistan. Nehru was devastated by this rude jolt to *his soft power delusions of global grandeur. These could not survive the regional military realities of the immediate neighbourhood.* He died a heartbroken man.

All this served to weaken the nation state in India and made it incapable of defending India in a serious inter-state conflict. The Chinese invasion of 1962 was a very rude shock and wake up call. Fortunately it was heeded and India returned to realism in Lal Bahadur Shastri's and Mrs Indira Gandhi's tenure. It greatly strengthened its armed forces and showed the political will to use them in a very decisive way in 1971. Unfortunately, in recent years of

UPA –I and II we have again seen a return of that pacifist outlook that seeks to marginalise and minimise the use of hard military power as a dispute resolution mechanism between nation states. India has failed to dissuade Pakistan from its asymmetric adventurism now for the last 30 years.

The Rise of Identity Politics and The Need for the Bose Perspective

The worst part of the current national scenario is the emergence of a new identity based politics. There is a new national narrative that emphasises caste and religious identities over a pan-Indian, national identity. *This new politics is splintering the polity and has torpedoed the national identity building project of the freedom struggle that had sought to downplay caste, creed and religion. The new caste dispensation seeks to emphasise the local and regional identities and quotas based on caste and now religion, to gain power. India has become a new communism of caste where meritocracy is being driven out. Caste politics throws up the lowest common denominator. The Indian intellectual elite have fashioned a new discourse which glorifies separatism and cultivated/ affected responses that seek to deride Patriotism as a Lumpen trait. There is a new found discourse that places a very lopsided emphasis on the human rights of armed terrorists and killers and seeks to constrain the state response in every possible way. There is a host of foreign funded NGOs* who have launched a shrill campaign in the media to tarnish the image of Indian Army, to demonise the military and completely hobble its Internal Security operations. The propaganda tool of Human Rights atrocities is being used to delegitimise its operations and demonise the Army. The military was being increasingly marginalised from the functions of the state in the UPA era as the political leadership seemed convinced that post-nuclearisation, military force was no longer a viable option. This is a grievous mistake. Even as internal armed challenges are increasing exponentially, the new caste elite are seeking to render the state virtually incapable of defending itself. The problem is compounded by the depths to which destructive Identity politics have taken root in our polity.

End of the National Identity Project

The resurrection of a plethora of caste based identities in India was a disastrous development given the history of the deeply centrifugal tendencies of the Indian polity in the past. It highlighted the poverty of

Indian politics. Instead of turning modernist, it had relapsed into a tribalistic mode that had generated a whole host of new caste faultlines over and above the old religious and ethnic divides. Post independence, the Scheduled Castes had effected a partly successful political mobilisation under a set of local caste leaders in the cow belt. However, the worst off were the Scheduled Tribes who lagged not only behind the general population, but even behind the Scheduled Castes in Human Development Indices like literacy (especially female literacy), nutritional security and Infant mortality etc. Under the influence of Maoist cadres, the Central and Peninsular Indian forest tribes have now been mobilised to wage a widespread insurgency in several provinces, which have dense forest cover. This is a dangerous insurgency in ideal guerilla terrain, and is likely to do considerable damage to our polity. It will need a major national effort to subdue the Maoist insurgency in the dense jungle tracts. The state will first and foremost have to effect an infrastructural and administrative penetration of these forest areas.

The Scheduled Castes and Tribes had suffered due to centuries of neglect and deprivation, and as such needed the crutch of affirmative action. However, the mobilisation of the backward castes via the Mandal agitation had truly served to compound the problems generated by the rise of identity politics. These were actully the castes that were the worst exploiters of the SC/ST downtrodden components of the Indian population. They constitute almost 50 percent of the Indian population and their demand for affirmative action had a ring of absurdity. They now mobilised politically to corner the benefits of affirmative action. *An insecure and self-centred political leadership under V.P. Singh consciously destroyed the idea of India by splintering the population along the lines of caste based faultlines. There was enough to divide India already in terms of religious, ethnic and linguistic faultlines. Caste was added to this cauldron of centrifugal and destructive forces in the Indian polity. Unconciously V.P. Singh had fallen back on the post 1857 British strategy of promoting caste fault lines to divide and rule India in perpetuity.* Petty political leadership must be squarely blamed for pandering to identity politics and reviving the idea of caste to divide the Indian population into captive vote banks. With this self-promoting exercise, they have betrayed the Nationalist Struggle for independence in India. The colonial masters had tried to kill the idea of India by accentuating the faultlines based on religion, caste and ethnicity. It was tragic that post-independence, a self-serving

political leadership sought to derail the nationalist project of crafting a pan-Indian identity by a relapse into tribalism that was characterised by political mobilisation based on caste. Tribalism is the anti-thesis of the nation state. This relapse into tribalism of caste was bound to prove fatal for the nascent nationalism, which our visionary leaders of the Freedom Struggle had worked so hard to promote – a feeling that India was more than just a civilisational entity. Its political unity was based on a new idea of India where local identities would be downplayed and primacy given to a pan-Indian outlook. From Kashmir to Kanyakumari to Kamrup, India was one civilisational entity. Caste, creed and religion based identities were to be subordinated to the project of crafting a pan-Indian identity. That entire project of the Freedom Struggle stands negated today, betrayed by pygmies without vision, whose sole basis for political mobilisation was based on the tribalism of caste loyalties. The need for affirmative action to uplift the downtrodden Dalits and Tribals was well-understood. The *Mandalisation* of the backward castes however, destroyed the discourse of nationalism. *It created a new communism of caste that militated against the very concept of merit and meritocracy. An educational system must throw up an intellectual elite who could provide leadership to the people. The Indian political system of caste-based reservations has done its best to promote mediocrity and zealously oppose and sideline merit and talent. We have driven out most of our talented IIT students to the Silicon valley, to NASA and as doctors in the USA*. Such a system can hardly be expected to throw up a creative minority who could lead a civilisation forward to greater heights of glory. As an ancient and creative civilisation, we could not have done more to promote mediocrity in our midst and cause a brain-drain of talent to foreign shores. Yes we have some 30 percent Indians living below the poverty line in India and most of these are the Dalits and Tribals. They need the help of the Indian State. This help must be targeted only to those who need it. I would suggest that we change our caste based reservation/ affirmative action system immediately to one that is based solely on economic criterion and not the sub- identity labels of caste and creed. Poverty hurts all regardless of his or her cast and creed. It is the duty of the Indian state to look after its poor INDIANs, regardless of whether they are Hindus, Muslims, Christians or Sikhs, Suvarnas or Dalits or tribals.Those in need must be helped by the state but not in a manner that gives a strong fillip to identity politics designed to splinter and destroy the state in India. Otherwise as job opportunities reduce

in this country we will see greater accentuation of caste conflict because affirmative action has most incorrectly been associated with tags of caste and jati. One of the greatest legacies of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose was his strong opposition to labels of caste and creed. He had trenchantly opposed identity politics based on caste and creed to destroy the very idea of India. That is precisely what the colonists from Britain had said, there is NO India, only a warring conglomeration of castes and creeds forever at war with one another. Foreigners were needed to rule India and adjudicate between these warring castes and tribes, to impose Imperial justice on a bunch of squabbling Indians who would otherwise shred one another to pieces. Today India most desperately needs to revive the ideology of Netaji if it is to survive this latest assault to break up and destroy its unity and make our universities the dens of Separatism, castisim and Communism, an ideology that has failed the world over. Communism failed in Russia, Germany, Poland, Hungary, Ukraine, Ceckoslovakia and even China which has turned capitalist. Why should this failed ideology be shoved down our throats via a new Communism of caste? Why should a National University celebrate an arch terrorist like Afzal Guru who attacked the iconic symbol of Indian democracy, The Indian Parliament? It is being done under the banner of free speech. How many American Universities hold events to celebrate Osama Bin Laden or Ata Mohammad, the man who launched 9/11. They may discuss intervention in Vietnam and Iraq but how many American students call for the secession of Alaska or Texas? The last time that happened, the Americans had to fight the Bloody Civil War. An insidious attempt is being made to splinter the Pan-Indian identity and break up India. American and European think-tanks have been talking of Afro-Dalit faultlines which could splinter India into pieces. JNU Professors lecture us on the fact that India is a prison house of nationalists and we must let J&K, Nagaland and Manipur go. There is that attempt to turn our universities into hot beds of secessionism. That is why we need to revive today the immortal legacy of Subhash Chandra Bose.

That is why this book.

The Notion of Power

Civilisations must grasp the essence of the notion of power in its totality. Power implies hard power plus soft power. For far too long, the fallacy of the Indian civilisation has been its inability to come to terms with the need for

basic hard power and unity. The *Argumentative Indian* has argued for too long. Today, we need to dispense with the discourse of identity based politics, which could unravel our nation state and fracture its polity. We had no dearth of pre-existing faultlines in terms of religious, linguistic and ethnic divides, and there was absolutely no need to accentuate the faultlines of caste.

The prime lesson of our history has been this sad lack of unity and coherence. The celebration of diversity beyond a point has been a prescription for disaster. It splintered India into a myriad of fieldoms, which were constantly at war with each other and fell easy prey to one foreign invasion after another. Today, we have to ask ourselves as to what are we doing to our great Indic civilisation. Why are we bent upon sabotaging our own potential and destroying our own unity by promoting a politics of endless internal conflict that splinters and fragments, that throws up the Lowest Common Denominator instead of the highest good? Post-independence India has been ill-served by her intellectuals who have failed to be true thought leaders and visionaries, they have pitifully fallen back on the British Imperial discourse of promoting caste identities. India has been ill-served by her politicians who have failed to rise above the pettiness and selfishness of self-gain. Where are the men and women with a national vision today? Where are the charismatic leaders like Bose and Patel who could galvanize huge masses of men? We had seen them in our freedom struggle. Today, we need them desperately to raise ourselves above our self-created morass of mediocrity and the communism of caste.

Communism was an inefficient form of governance. It has failed universally today, we desperately need to reinvent our polity and change our strategic direction of drift. We have entered an evolutionary cul de sac that could destroy our civilisation or at the very least, condemn it in perpetuity to incompetence and mediocrity. We need a plethora of Boses and Patels. We need another INA, an Indian National Army of patriotic Indians who can rise above the pettiness of caste, creed and ethnicity, who can unify and synthesize. For whom, this country is not just a place–*It is an Overwhelming Emotion!*

In short, we need to revive the nationalism that had energised our freedom struggle. We need in specific, to revive the nationalist pre-independence project of crafting a pan-Indian identity that will subsume the faultlines of caste, creed and religion; and unleash India's true potential. The

youth in India are idealistic and would respond admirably to such a project for reviving nationalism in our country. When Bose was in Berlin, he had created a think-tank to go into the issues of how a future nation state in India should function; what should be the policies that guide its development and strengthen its society. Bose is relevant not merely as a military leader but equally as a political and economic visionary. We need to study his thoughts and treasure his insights. He was capable of global thinking. He had exhorted Indians to rise above caste and creed.

What if

What would have happened had Bose assumed charge from the British? For one, India may not have been partitioned. For two- it would have placed a fair degree of emphasis on strengthening the military capability and industrial strength of the state in India. It would have been a strongly modernist and secular state that would have aggressively down played caste and creed in politics and focused strongly on creating a pan-Indian identity.

This book then is my personal tribute to one of the greatest Indians of the last century. Determined bids to censor and sideline his legacy have failed to wipe it out. The Legacy of Bose and his Indian National Army have only become more pressing and important as time has passed. Today India needs to revive the legacy of that icon of nationalism. Bose indeed was an Indian Samurai, a Scholar–Warrior par–excellence. Let no one forget this fact, he was India's first Supreme Commander and a Prince amongst patriots. His charisma and spell binding oratory come across to us over six decades after his demise. I am reminded of that rather riveting and epic movie- "The Last Samurai". In that movie the Young Japanese Emperor asks Tom Cruise to tell him how the great Samurai warrior had died.

Tom Cruise had replied –

"I'd rather tell you how he lived!"

APPENDIX

The Nation State and Nationalism in India

Bose was an icon of Indian nationalism. Today we need to invoke his name because Indian nationalism *per se* is faltering. There is a need to clearly understand what nationalism means and what it implies. Key to the existence of nation states are racial memories that are shared amongst the people who constitute that state. Thus every nation has its own understanding of its distinctive past that is conveyed through stories, myths and history. These stories and myths may not be historically accurate. The key however is the trenchant strength of these shared beliefs. So, whether historically accurate or otherwise, these memories contribute to the understanding of the present. It is this continuity of the narratives between the past and present that provides the nation state its key characteristic– *temporal depth and persistence over time.*

Thus the Japanese nation state traces its descent to the myth of the worship of the Sun Goddess–Amaterasu, whose temple is at Ise. The Japanese Emperor is said to have descended from the Sun Goddess and sired the Japanese race. The historical accuracy of this myth or otherwise is not germane to the issue. *This self designating, shared belief creates a collective self-consciousness that runs from the past to the present*. The Nations formed around these shared beliefs are not merely about a distinctive but a *spatially* shared past. There is a spatial focus to the relation between the individuals who constitute a nation. The idea of the nation is linked to a given geographic space or expanse of territory.

With this as a backdrop , let us now try to define what do we mean by the term-nation? Steven Grosby, Professor at Clemson University states, "The nation is a territorial community of nativity. One is born into a nation. The nation is one among a number of forms of kinship (eg. family, tribe, city-state or various ethnic groups). It differs because of the greater extent of its territory but also because of its relatively uniform culture that provides stability and a continuation over time."

Nations have their own understandings of their distinctive past. This is what separates 'us' from ' them' or from a hostile and threatening *"non-self"*, the *"other"*. This shared past is conveyed through stories, myths and history. In India we have the national epic of the *Mahabharata,* which tells the story of a country called Bharat and the wars that it fought over the idea of political legitimacy and political systems. While most Indian kingdoms were monarchies, there were also Republics in that ancient era. Above all was the concept of the Chakravartin ruler, who like the Chinese Emperor, loosely ruled *'all under heaven'* and provided legitimacy to the notion of a nation called Bharat. *Nations are thus formed around shared, self-designating beliefs that have such a structure*. These self-designating and shared beliefs are called collective self-consciousness or a distinctive culture and tradition. This culture serves to distinguish it from all the rest.

Territorial Instinct

At the basis of the nation state is the animal instinct for territory. Even animals mark out their territory by scent markers of droppings and urination. All animals need a particular geographic space to live and feed/ forage and express themselves. The bigger the animal the more space it needs to express and sustain itself. This territory instinct is at the basis of the animals' "Fight- Flight" response. Near the periphery of its territorial space, an animal will flee. At its core or its centre, it will fight to its death. The animal kingdom therefore is deeply programmed genetically to think in terms of ownership of geographical space or territory. That is the basis of the territorial instinct that mankind seems to have inherited in the course of its evolutionary descent. It is a primal instinct and a very powerful one at that. It is the core of the present day concept of nationalism and nation states.

The term nation therefore, refers both to the land and its people. They are unified by the notion of territory and birth. The citizens of the nation and their ancestors were all born into this Homeland. *The nation therefore is a social relation with both temporal depth and bounded territory.*

The national consciousness is sustained by rituals, symbols (flags, emblems, anthems) and a shared history. Parents transfer to their offspring not only physical genes, but also cultural memes–the cultural inheritances from a distant past, their language, customs, religion, etc. of the larger group. *Birth within its territory confers citizenship. It is recognised as the primary criterion for the membership of the nation*. The nation has two lines of descent, descent in the territory of the nation (the Homeland concept) and genetic descent from parents who are members of the nation. The focus of the nation is territorial descent. Patriotism is a consequence of the preoccupation with the continuation of the self, both in its biological and cultural components. The love that one has for the nation is designated by this term "patriotism". It is an incredibly powerful emotion for it has its roots in the deep-seated territorial instinct that can lead an organism to fight to its death in the protection of the space identified as an extension of the self. It has led to amazing deeds of *self-sacrificial altruism* as also brutal massacres. Patriotism leads one to transcend the narrow ego and identify with the far larger cultural construct of the nation that extends not only through space but also through time. One is now identifying the self with a far larger entity that transcends the self and changes the very mode of self-centred behaviour devoted to purely preserving the organism. This self-transcendence and identification can reach extreme levels.

Ernest Renan, the French scholar, asks in his essay '*What is a nation*', and answers, "it is a coming together over time of previously distinct populations that have much in common. *It implies a bounded, territorial community of customs and laws.*" The term nation implies a continuation over time of a relatively uniform territorial culture. A nation needs the following:-

- Extensive territory
- A self-designating name
- A centre (a National Capital Region) with National Institutions eg. Monuments, Temples, Parliament, Supreme Court, National Army, etc.
- A history that asserts and expresses its temporal continuity

- Relatively uniform culture often based on a common language, religion and law.
- Each of these characteristics however, is rarely found to be absolute or complete.

Nation State

The nation now seeks to express itself through a nation state out of a dire necessity to protect and preserve the lives of its members. The nation, through its representatives and institutions, can act to secure its protection and preservation in the world. Nations must invent trans-individual traditions. They must build monuments, mausoleums, museums and temples. They must hold celebratory mass rituals, pageants and parades. The reaffirmation of traditions and its transmission from one generation to the next necessarily involves modification to the tradition. There, nevertheless, has to be a core of continuity that imparts temporal depth to the idea of the nation state. Legal development supports the establishment of a territorial relation of the nation and this *must invariably include the formation of a National Army.*

A nation therefore is defined as a relatively extensive territorial relation of nativity. The purpose of state is *as a territorially extensive yet bounded social-relation for the generation, transmission and sustenance of life. When it becomes a nation state, it is also a structure for the protection of life.* The modern nation state that emerged after the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648 is characterised by a total monopolisation of violence within its territory. It is characterised by a triangular relationship between the state, its uniformed Armed and Police Forces (that have the sole right to bear and use arms) and a wholly *disarmed population*. All modern nation states must thoroughly disarm their population to enforce a monopoly of violence. This is a primal condition for the coming into being of a nation state. Nation states like Pakistan, that indiscriminately weaponise their societies could unravel as a direct consequence.

Homeland

Given its vast cultural diversity and heterogeneity, what suits India best is the construct of the nation as Homeland and by extension the Fatherland/Motherland. It is homeland or territory into which each of us is born- whether Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Christian or whatever. Birth in a

territory, to parents who were born here, qualifies one for the citizenship or belonging to a Homeland. The image of the territory becomes a conceptual point of reference in the trans-individual meaning of relations within the nation. This image is not only spatially expansive but is also temporally deep. The territorially extensive homeland of the nation is viewed as a home. *It too is a structure of anxiety reducing– familiarity. As you return to your national homeland from a foreign country, you always experience a feeling of relief.*

Thus a part of the self has been put into the spatial structures (the familial home or one's national homeland). These are perceived to be locational frameworks for the very generation and transmission of life. For the family, the primary focus is the parents but for the nation it is the territory. Spatial attachment to the family home can be quite pronounced, especially when a family has lived in the same home for generations and when one's parents are buried/ cremated in the immediate area of the home. In the latter case, a part of oneself, those who imparted life to you has literally been put into the inanimate land. This deeply strengthens the territorial instinct and enhances the cultural significance of the spatial territory of the nation to its citizens. Most patriotic poems and ditties cite the *"ashes of the fathers and the temples of the Gods"* as an object of reverence. The Japanese worship the ancestors and by extension, the land they peopled. *The land is deemed an extension of the self and is life giving and sustaining.* Not only does the Homeland sustain physical life and nature, it also sustains the cultural memes and habits of nurture and ensures their transmission and continuation over time.

So that brings us to the seminal question, is India a nation? There is a view that there was really no historical nation like India and it is only the British who forged its diverse and squabbling populations into a Nation state that emerged only in 1947.

In India, this remarkable continuity over time, however, spans five millenniums. It has survived repeated invasions and colonial campaigns to stamp out the very idea of India. The very concerted colonial campaign to eradicate the pan-Indian identity, failed to prevent the reemergence of the nation state in India. India, as a state however, is yet to recover fully from the terribly divisive strategies inflicted upon it during the two centuries long colonial era. A large number of educated Indians still subscribe to the colonial hypothesis that India was never a nation state. They aver that only

the British Empire had welded the warring castes and clans into a governable entity. This is testimony to the very successful British colonial establishment's attempt to destroy the very idea of India and to reduce it to a welter of castes, creeds, tribes and linguistic communities.

This colonial construct needs to be contested strongly. The idea of the nation actually, has deep roots in India .The Indian civilisation is the oldest living civilisation on the face of this earth. The threads of continuity can be traced back to the seals of the Indus valley civilisation that depict a proto Shiva in a Yogic posture of meditation. Surrounded by animals, he can be recognised as the *Pashupatinath*- the Lord of animals, or the Shiva of today, who is considered the archetypal Yogi. There are the ancient *Vedas,* thousands of exquisite hymns that were memorised and passed on from generation to generation for over a thousand years. It was the most incredible feat of the preservation of collective memories in any culture. The last of the Vedas the *Athrava Veda*, clearly speaks of the *Rashtra* or nation. There are, in addition, the epics of *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* that still exercise a powerful hold upon the collective imagination of the Indian people. These epics describe and demarcate the geographic and cultural space of the Indian subcontinent. They have a self-designating name for this nation called *"Bharat"*, which has come down to us even today. Till this day, this self designating name is used in all important rituals. *Jambu Dweepe Bharat Khande* is an incantation that situates the performer of the Hindu rituals in the world island of *Jambu Dweep* and the territory of a nation called *Bharat*. It is recited before the performance of any Hindu ritual of birth, death. Yagna or marriage etc.

The problem in the Indian context is that this civilisational and cultural unity has very rarely been transformed into political unification. In these 5,000 years, the entire territory of India was unified only thrice for three episodes that roughly lasted some two centuries each. As stated earlier, these were the unifications effected by the South Asian empires of the Mauryas, the Mughals and the British. The present Indian Republic is the successor entity of the British Empire. The problems were the long interludes of breakup and disarray that came between the unifications of the Empires. Despite this, the idea of India (Bharat) and the Indic civilisation however have been an undeniable historical fact. The Mahabharta talks of warriors from Assam and Nagaland (Gatokkatch was a Naga warior and Bhagadatta was a king of Assam who was the best Elephant warrior in the whole

country), as also from Afghanistan (Gandhara), Mathura, Maghada ,Kuru, Panchala, Kamboj and Vanga desha (present day Bengal) and many other provinces of present day India. Thus Kautilya, a Brahmin scholar reputedly from South India, was the National Security Advisor of Chandragupta Maurya, the first Emperor, who founded the Mauryan Empire from Patliputra in East India. The Adi Shankaracharya best highlighted this cultural unity in the 7th century AD, when he constructed four monasteries in the four remote corners of India (in all four cardinal directions). Interestingly, to highlight the unity of the idea of India, he appointed abbots to these monasteries from diametrically opposite areas/regions of India. Thus an abbot from North India presided over the monastery in South India (Kanchipuram), and one from the west in the East coast monastery at Puri. Similarly the abbot at the Badrinath Dham in the North is always chosen from South India. The Adi Shankaracharya himself came from the deep South, from the state of Kerala . These were deliberate attempts to highlight the deep cultural unity of the Indic civilisation.

India has been a cultural melting pot, a land of synthesis. Countless races and tribes have poured from all over Asia into its fertile plains. Whatever their origins, they came to this vast homeland in wave after wave, and settled down here. India became their "Homeland" and it is the concept of this homeland that makes India a nation, despite its bewildering diversity of languages, races, religions and tribes. The common pool of memories is spatially shared across the cultural and temporal extent of the Indian sub-continent. What defines the Indic civilisation is its wonderful assimilative ability to synthesise diverse strands into a culture of unity that still manages to preserve the diversity.

There was however, one significant departure from this homeland tradition. The British Empire was run by a European race that refused to settle down in India permanently and become a part of this homeland. To overcome the foreigness and exteriority of their rule, they propagated an insidious ideology that sought to destroy the very idea of India. They claimed that India had never been a nation and that its badly divided people were so much at war with one another, that only a Foreign power could be impartial and objective and provide Imperial justice and fairplay to its warring populations. For two centuries, the British Empire expended its tremendous energies, in creating and widening major fault-lines in the Indian body

politik. They justified foreign rule in India on the premise that India was never a nation but a huge cauldron of disparate races, castes and ethnicities, forever at war with one another. Such a heterogeneous population was incapable of ruling itself. Only an external power could provide imperial justice to the warring religions, castes and tribes of India. Only external rule could be impartial and objective and hence *just*. Thus, was propagated, a concept of *Imperial Justice* as the corner stone of the colonial empire that was inherently extrinsic, extractive and very exploitative. Over a period of almost two centuries, the victims of this colonial narrative completely and thoroughly internalised this pernicious discourse of inferiority and divisiveness. India, a prosperous land of milk and honey and plentitude, was now plagued by famines. Its self sufficient political economy was wilfully destroyed by the colonizers by efficient extraction of loot and dumping of its industrialised goods.

No other nation state in recent history has ever been subjected to two centuries of such a concerted cultural assault, designed to destroy its self-consciousness of itself as a nation. No other nation state has ever been subject to such a concerted assault upon its very fundamental idea of being and had the considerable energies of an empire expended primarily to divide and splinter its population along the fault-lines of religion, caste, tribe and language. The colonial administration did everything in its power to divide and fracture the population, encourage competing groups to fight for British patronage, humiliate the natives and instill in them a deep feeling of inferiority about their own heritage and culture. The British attempt was to effectively destroy the very idea of India and make sure that after the great uprising of 1857, its diverse populations would never again unite to threaten the colonial hold of the British Empire.

Despite all their efforts to prevent it, however, this is precisely what happened in the end.

There were three distinct strands in the freedom struggle of India. The anglophile lawyers of the Congress had begun the freedom struggle in a very effete way by appealing to Imperial Justice, pleading and putting up petitions and memorandums to the Queen Empress for a measure of autonomy or home rule. They considered themselves as loyal subjects of the Empire and petitioned the queen against their local colonial rulers. Even this request for Home rule or Dominion status was turned down on racial grounds. India

participated enthusiastically in the First World War, in the fond hope of earning British gratitude. What it got instead was the racist massacre of Jallianwalah Bagh in Amritsar. This, just a year after the war, in which 1.3 million Indians had participated and some 72,000 had laid down their lives. This was a critical turning point in India's Freedom struggle.

Mahatma Gandhi appeared on the scene at this stage and carried out a mass mobilisation of the Indian peasantry. This was a movement of non-cooperation with the British rulers. How could they rule the people of India without their consent? He asked the people of India to boycott British goods. This mass mobilisation shook the British. Gandhi however kept it non-violent, and the British soon found non-violence to be entirely within their tolerance thresholds. In fact, they even tacitly encouraged this strain of the freedom struggle. The third strand of this struggle was the violence of the Revolutionaries like Bhagat Singh and Chandra Shekhar Azad. This worried the British and they were ruthless in its suppression. What led to the final eclipse of the British Empire in India however, was the violence of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose and his Indian National Army (INA). Though it lost the battles of Imphal and Kohima, it won the War for India's Independence by instigating massive armed rebellion in the Indian Armed Forces. The military men of the INA and the regular armed forces were however rapidly marginalised, as was Mahatma Gandhi.

A '*Vakil Raj*' led by anglophile lawyers like Nehru, took charge in New Delhi. They modeled the Indian Constitution on the British India Act of 1935 and made Justice the foremost principle enshrined in the Indian Constitution. It was a thinly disguised idea grafted from Imperial justice as the cornerstone of the empire. The amazing fact however is that even after two centuries of abject racial humiliation and a most concerted attempt by the British Empire to stamp out the very idea of India, it resurfaced strongly in the Freedom Struggle, and by 1947 India was once again a free nation state. Strong nationalist leaders like Sardar Patel moved decisively to force the Indian princely states to merge with India and thus create a coherent and contiguous, territorial nation state that was viable.

Proto-Nations and Modern Nations

As highlighted earlier, the case of India as a nation is unique. No other nation has been subjected to such a sustained cultural assault to destroy its identity. This colonial assault was all pervasive. It used the tools of governance by way of census exercises to highlight caste differences, it created separate electorates for religious groups and then the Scheduled Castes and Tribes, etc. It also included the very system of education that was moulded to shape the attitudes of the Indian subjects as also in art and culture to highlight the so called congenital inferiority of the Indic civilisation, and its constantly warring conglomerate of castes and creeds. Pavan K. Varma writes in *'Becoming Indian: the Unfinished Revolution of Culture & Identity'*, "Colonialism was such a deeply dislocating event because its critique was internalized by its victims."

Ernest Benfield Havell (the then British Principal of the Government School of Art at Calcutta, and a great supporter of the Indian artistic tradition) wrote that "British Rule had subverted the artistic tradition of India, *severing the Indian educated classes from their cultural roots and reducing them to little more than mindless mimics of western fashions and mores. There was a want of pride and want of faith in their own traditional culture on the part of the upper classes of India* that was much more destructive to Indian Art than the ignorance or indifference of the Europeans. Nothing" he wrote, "was more intellectually depressing than *the sense of constitutional inferiority that seemed to have possessed the Indians*. The great scourge eating into the creative faculties of educated Indians was the inclination to mimic European artistic traditions." Varma said, "In such a process, …… *an entire culture attempts to reinterpret itself in terms that will somehow win the dominant outsiders' (colonisers') approval. They finally end up as caricatures, divorced from their own cultural milieu and perpetually alone, inspite of their best efforts at emulation* (of their colonizers)."

British educationists like Macaulay had ensured that the colonisation of the Indian mind was so thorough and complete that over six decades after Independence, the dominant colonial narrative of imperial justice and induced civilisational inferiority, still haunts the Indian narrative. Under the cloak of left wing liberalism, the entire intellectual discourse in India is still premised around the *colonial anchor of Imperial Justice*. It refuses to see India as a nation state and continues to emphasise the disruptive discourse of caste and creed to divide and fragment the pan-Indian identity. This is a

crass attempt to perpetuate the colonial legacy of divide and rule. Its central construct is that Indian society is deeply divided and fractured. An external, colonial rule was needed to impose justice and equity between the perpetually warring segments of Indian society. Only the British that were extrinsic to this fractured Indian society could ensure impartial and even-handed meting out of Imperial Justice. Left to itself, India could never be a nation.

The British were finally forced to leave because escalating revolts in the British Indian Armed Forces made it impossible for them to continue to govern India. They left finally, but the colonial narrative that they left behind, continues to dominate the intellectual landscape in India to this day. It has still not been challenged. The Nehru-Gandhi dynasty was discovered as the new dispensers of Imperial Justice between the warring castes and creeds of India. The Nehru-Gandhis were westernised, anglophile elites who stepped into the shoes of the Imperial Colonisers. Only they could ensure imperial justice and equity amongst the warring castes and creeds of India, only they could ensure justice and secularism in an even-handed manner because though Indians by birth, they were anglophile by inclination, and thereby neutral arbiters for the chaotic mass of competing social groups in India. Though of this society, they were, by virtue of their anglo-phile inclinations, extrinsic to its inchoate and warring populations. A whole bevy of court historians was recruited to construct the new post–colonial narrative around the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty as the new dispensers of imperial justice in India. *The anchor premise of the Indian Constitution (as spelt out in the Preamble) was not Freedom or Liberty but Justice.* The Colonial Society had been so thoroughly fractured that imposing 'Justice' (social and otherwise) was made the anchor premise of the Indian Republic's Constitution. *The transition from Imperial Justice to the social justice of the Mandal era is so very patent and painfully obvious*. A few decades of industrialisation had began to erode the barriers of caste and creed and usher in the homogenisation of modern Indian society. People had begun to forget the deep divisions of caste and creed in crowded trains, metros and buses. The city provided the anonymity of the mass where the entrenched barriers of caste and creed of village society, withered away and soon had started to become anachronisms in a modern nation state. It was then that Raja of Munda, V.P. Singh, dusted out the genie of caste from the colonial

closet and revived it with the new vehemence of Mandalisation to serve his petty political ends of desperately hanging on to power.

This happened when V.P. Singh, an extreamly clever and manipulative politician, decided to unleash his 'Mandalisation' of the Indian polity just to counter a local caste satrap. He went right back to the colonial legacy to revive caste in a most trenchant manner by now linking it with affirmative action in terms of job reservations. With a rising population, jobs were always going to be at a premium. Petty politicians now linked job reservations to caste across the board. Indian political leaders were now doing to themselves what the British colonisers had ultimately failed to do to India and Indians. The caste card was unleashed to deepen the faultlines in Indian society and ensure that all Indian elections were hijacked now by the identity markers of caste and creed. It was a death blow directed at Indian nationalism. In his desperation to cling to power, the Raja of Munda had lost all sense of balance and proportion. He had played the tried and tested card of the colonial dispensation based on caste and the concept of Imperial Justice as equity. The pity was the alacrity with which the entire Intellectual class in India pathetically jumped on to this caste bandwagon. The court historian of the Nehru-Gandhi clan, Romila Thapar emerged as the new Queen of Caste and justified the then government's actions by her colonial discourse that the Indian society is genetically fractured on caste lines, there is no such religion like Hinduism, there is instead a coalition of castes, Jatis and Varnas, caste is the sole reality in the deeply divided Indian society etc.

The Indian leftist liberals of post-colonial India had now dusted out the original colonial thesis. Indian society had to be kept deeply divided and fractured, to enable a westernised elite to rule on the basis of ensuring secularism, which in practical terms implied splitting the Hindu majority into a splinter of castes to make it electorally completely irrelevant. The post-colonial discourse of imperial justice as equity saw its full blossoming in India with the elevation of Sonia Gandhi to the status of the new Queen Empress of India. She was European and white and as such, preeminently qualified to be an impartial ruler over the deeply fractured Indian polity. Only a white European Empress could ensure social justice and protect the minorities from dominance by the Hindu majority in India. The Nehru-Gandhi royal family was the core construct of the Congress Party. Only a white, European female could effectively play the role of Queen Empress of

India and continue with the Imperial Justice legacy of equity being enforced by an external ruler. Indians were still unfit to govern themselves. They needed a white Dowager empress.

One of the key factors in perpetuating the colonial legacy of Imperial Justice as equity, was the Brown Sahibs of the Indian Administrative and Police Services. This English speaking class formed the new ruling elite of India. The bureaucratic elite manipulated the political class with great finesse and made the Hindi speaking, rustic leaders feel distinctly insecure. It was this uber-class of bureaucrats in Delhi that now conferred legitimacy to the political ruling establishments and by a clever process of leaks to the press, and exaggerated fears induced in the ruling class, were able to subvert their agendas and manipulate them entirely. This has become most painfully visible, with even the new NDA dispensation in New Delhi, which despite its crushing mandate, has been able to change very little on the ground so far. This is thanks entirely to the inertia and attrition imposed by the bureaucratic class in India which has become the biggest obstacle to change and rapid growth.

This uber-class was ably supported by the upper crust of English speaking journalists in the Indian media. Many of these media elite shamelessly genuflected before the dynasty and were courtiers and ardent *darbaris* in the Mughal court of the new, white Queen Empress of India. They shamelessly craved for Padama bhushans by vociferously supporting the dynasty and attacking the opposition party. A virtual media witch hunt was launched against Modi himself and he was demonised. Traditionally, in a democracy, the media acts as a watchdog and a check on the government. The English media in India genuflected shamelessly to the powers that were and the media of courage became history. Between the English-speaking bureaucracy and the so called leftist liberal media, the colonial ideology of imperial justice as equity was sustained for decades. It was only the arrival of a new Hindi speaking political elite led by Mr. Narendra Damodardas Modi, that unsettled this equation. The social media stepped in to fill the breach caused by the failure of the dominant electronic and print media to act as a check on the Dynasty. The social media largely was responsible for generating and sustaining the Modi wave. However, hardly a year down the line the entrenched English speaking bureaucracy had seemingly re-asserted itself. Even Prime Minister Modi was soon seeking endorsement by

attempting to switch to regionally accented English in his speeches, thus losing his major advantage as a skilled communicator in Hindi. The bureaucracy had stalled big ticket economic reforms and brought India's Foreign Policy back to its beaten track of serving American interests in Pakistan and compromise after compromise on the issue of Kashmir and Pakistani terrorism.

It is this uber, English speaking class, the last hangover of the colonial era that is the most deeply entrenched, rear guard of the empire. It still seeks endorsement from the white races. England has been replaced by America as the new source of Imperial order and Justice as equity. This uber-class trenchantly believes that India became a nation state only after 1947. That its very nationhood was a gift bequeathed by the British Empire, to which their gratitude should be eternal and everlasting!

Nations and Proto-Nations.

There is a school of thought which feels that the proto nations of history, even historic nations like China and Japan were not nation states in the real sense of the term. Nation states, they aver, could only come into being with the major advances in communications brought about by printed books, newspapers and periodicals and then the radio and TV mediums along with the telephone and now the mobile, internet and Dark net. These communication media resulted in the creation of literate populations and thereby stabilised previously oral cultures and their languages through the print media. They also served to disseminate that language throughout the nation's territory. Thus these new communication media promoted the national culture and consolidated territorially bounded linguistic communities. All these factors have contributed to the definition of the self in the collective conscious of the nation. It is this that *leads so many scholars to conclude that nation states are a historically recent phenomenon and the proto-nations of the past were never really true nation states.*

That is why most intellectuals in India are convinced that the nation state in India emerged only after 1947 and that the Proto-nations of the past formed by the Maruyan and Mughal empires (that unified the territory, enabled a common legal system, created a central army and monetised the Indian economy on the silver standard) were never really nation states in the true

sense of the word. As such they fully subscribe to the colonial discourse of the empire, which maintained that India was never a nation and in fact, its population was so divided and fractured that it could never govern itself but needed to be governed by an external foreign power to ensure justice and equity to its constantly warring population segments, divided so thoroughly by caste and creed.

Pre-Modern Nations

The current narrative then is that pre-modern nations that lacked these multiple media for national consolidation were really not nations in the true sense of the word. Pre-Modern nations were created by myths– myths like the Sun Goddess myth of Japan and the *Mahabharata* of India. These myths contributed to the formation of the image of a bounded, territorial relation of temporal duration. These formative myths, which are really beliefs with no empirical foundation, accomplish this unification by formulating connections between historically actual societies to a perceived order of the universe (through the act of Gods), eg. formation of the Japanese nation by the Sun Goddess through the agency of the Emperor. By this process, the historical uniqueness of the territorial community is justified. Thus, the historian *Delmar Brown observes that in the process of the formation of nations, we see the device of making myths more historical and making actual events more mythical*. It is through its history– broadly understood here, to also include the formative myths, that as such blur the distinction between fact and meaningful fancy that a nation uses to understand itself and in so doing, constitutes itself.

The culture of these pre-modern societies was fragmented both vertically and horizontally. Vertically, differences existed between the educated elite (who knew Sanskrit in the Indian context) and the illiterate peasants who were far more attached to their separate localities. Thus *ancient societies exhibited sharp cultural and political distinction between the ruling centre and the host of culturally isolated localities.* This is what impels modern scholars to question how pre-modern states could become national communities. These need the unifying agencies of the modern means of communications, public education, a uniform territory and pervasive laws and democratic citizenship. A lot of emphasis is based on the last named factor. In fact, the democratic concept of citizenship has contributed massively to the

establishment of nation states. Democracy promotes a belief in the equality of the members of a nation, thereby contributing in a significant way to the sense of nation as a community. What then really welds a modern nation together are three critical factors:-

- Democratic conception of citizenship
- Extensive market for manufactured goods and services
- Advances in communications

Without these modern pre-requisites, nation state formation is impossible, aver the scholars. Hence India was never a nation state before 1947.

This view is now being challenged by a more nuanced and accurate appraisal of pre-modern societies. The spread of major world religions in antiquity like Buddhism, Christianity and later Islam calls into question the supposed cultural isolation of populations that were largely illiterate. In fact, thousands of years ago, the simple tenets of Shamanism had propagated to all continents of the world, from Asia to Africa, the Americas and Australia, in societies that were wholly illiterate. There was an amazing degree of commonality between the shamanic theory and practices in the diverse continents of the world. The magnificent spread of Buddhism across the whole of Asia by a saffron clad army of Indian monks is yet another feat of communication that would be difficult to replicate even in today's era of the internet and satellite communications.

In fact, the spread of world religions in antiquity indicates that extensive relations throughout vast populations and across great distances can indeed be formed even in the absence of mass produced books, newspapers, railways and markets for industrial goods. Moreover, a study of history highlights that law codes were found throughout antiquity and the Middle Ages, as well as conceptions of territories with fairly well defined boundaries.

To sum up this discussion therefore, ancient or modern, the following characteristics are needed for the formation of a nation state:-

- A self-designating name
- A written history

- A degree of cultural uniformity often as a result of and sustained by religion
- Legal Codes
- An authoritative centre
- The conception of a bounded territory

On each of these criteria, ancient India qualifies as a nation. Its self-designating name was Bharat and later Hindustan (from the Arabic for Hindu based on Sindhu–the cradle river of the Indian civilisation). It had an extensive oral and written history in the form of the Vedas, the Puranas and the national epics of the *Ramayan* and the *Mahabharat*, which still exercise such an extensive hold upon the popular imagination. Iqbal wrote, "*Hai Ram ke wajood par Hindustan ko Naaz*" (India is proud of the legacy of Rama). The Hindu religion provides a great modicum of cultural uniformity. Beyond that (and often because of the mystical nature of Hinduism *per se*), we see an astonishing culture of tolerance and cross-cultural synthesis. Hinduism recognised the difference between men and outlined different paths to union with the transcendent reality, by way of Bhakti Yoga, Gyan Yoga, Karma yoga and Raj Yogas designed to suit very different psychological temperaments. This Vedic stanza sums up this integrative tendency- "*ekam sad, vipra bahuda vadanti*- That truth is one, the wise call him by many names". All the multifarious path that are ultimately lead to the same self-transcendent reality. Hinduism has an open ended architecture that supports plurality of approaches.

Coming to the legal codes and their widespread applicability-the codes of Manu date back to the Vedas. The *Artha-Shastra* codifies the laws that governed the Mauryan Empire. The Mughals had elaborate codes for jurisprudence and the delivery of justice. The authoritative power centre in India has oscillated between Patliputra and Delhi, and the conception of a bounded territory goes back to *Jambu Dweepe – Bharat Khande* – the Sanskrit incantation about territorial designation that is chanted before performing every Hindu ritual even today. Quite incidentally, the *Atharva Veda* talks of *Rashtra* or nation.

Thus India was not entirely a colonial construct. It was certainly not a gift of the British Empire. Nor was democracy a British transplant in Indian soil. There were clan republics in India in the times of Mahabharata and the

Buddha. The Indian empire of the Mauryas spread the Indian ideology of Buddhism to every corner of Asia. India is a significant historical entity deeply entrenched in the collective conscious of the Indic civilisation of South Asia. It faced the challenge of Muslim invasions, largely by absorbing and synthesizing the Muslim population in its melting pot. The most significant challenge however, was now from the British Empire, which consciously sought to destroy the very idea of India and mounted the most vicious challenge by systematically fracturing its population along caste and creed faultlines. The parting gift of the empire was the partition of India by carving out the Muslim homeland of Pakistan. Pakistan today has broken up and India now has the second largest Muslim population in the whole world, ingested relatively peacefully into its fabric. The British had tried to destroy the idea of India. They failed. Today, the idea of India has resurrected itself. *Wars with China and Pakistan (the hostile other) have deepened the idea of India by projecting it against a hostile non-self– the other.* The problem in India is that petty politicians had revived the colonial project of fracturing the Indian polity again on caste and creed lines for purely personal gain. That is why the revival of nationalism in 2014 has been such a significant phenomenon.

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Maj Gen (Dr.) **G D Bakshi** SM,VSM (retd) is a very well-known TV Commentator and India's leading Military Analyst. He is a prolific writer on matters military with over 30 books to his name.

This is a path breaking book by a former General that seeks to evaluate Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose as a military leader and indeed, the First Supreme Commander of India. Netaji was instrumental in India getting her freedom. It is the first professional attempt to evaluate the military performance of the Indian National Army (INA) in World War-II and its significant impact on the Freedom Struggle.

The book has gone into great details about each and every engagement fought by the INA. The INA was the primary catalyst that inspired the military revolts of 1946 that ultimately forced the British to quit. For the first time, the author has examined the events of 1946 – especially the revolts in the Royal Indian Navy and the British Indian Army in great detail. He has cited British sources to prove that these revolts were primarily instrumental in forcing the British to leave in such a tearing hurry merely two years after they won the Second World War.

This meticulously researched book seeks to reopen a significant historical debate about how India got her freedom. A succession of court historians have tried to craft a narrative that India had obtained her freedom entirely by the soft power of Ahimsa/non-violence and Satyagraha; and that hard power had no role to play whatsoever. This is a huge sacrilege. As per the INA's official history, the force had a total strength of 60,000. Of these, 26,000 were killed in action. Was that non-violence? The pity is that the Nehruvian dispensation treated these men as traitors. There is no memorial for these martyrs. The INA veterans were not taken back into the Army (on Mountbatten's advice) and denied their war time pensions. Any nation that seeks to gloss over the martyrdom of 26,000 of its soldiers erodes the very basis of its nationhood. The problem arose from the Nehruvian dispensation's quest for political legitimacy. It claimed that its non-violent struggle alone had liberated India from the colonial yoke and as such, that gave it the right to rule. This was a deliberate distortion of history to downplay the role of violence and completely bury the role of Bose and the INA. In denying this obvious legacy of force and violence, the Nehruvian dispensation went to inordinate lengths to underline the relevance of its ideology of pacifism and non-violence.

This denial of the use of force was thus pushed to inordinate lengths. Nehru claimed that India needed no armed forces and deliberately starved them of resources. He laid most exaggerated emphasis on pacifism even at the cost of national interests. India had to pay a major price for Nehru's quest for political legitimacy. The toll this exaggerated pacifism took, was seen by the whole world in the military disaster of 1962. Fortunately that served as a major wake up call for the onset of realism in India. The problem is that India's pre and post-independence histories form a seamless whole. They cannot be seen in isolation. Where a nation state is going depends a lot on where it came from. That is why this seminal debate on how India gained independence is vital for our future. The deeply ingrained ideology of Nehruvian pacifism keeps reasserting itself via the entrenched attitudes and habits of thought of our bureaucracy and political class. India's pathetic inability to deal with Pakistan's asymmetric adventurism over the past 30 years is a case in point.

There is also the dark secret about what finally happened to Bose. The author is pessimistic about the unearthing of the real truth as many critical Indian files have been destroyed. To get at the whole truth, we need access to Russian, Japanese and British archives. The author has analysed a wealth of data. It leaves us with some most disconcerting and horrible speculations about what happened to the man who in truth, got us our freedom. His legacy was buried and marginalised by a set of non-violent pretenders who expended inordinate amounts of energy in fighting the ghosts of the INA. Today, India as a nation needs to squarely face up to the truth. Bose, indeed was the icon of Indian nationalism. Today, we need to revive his legacy in the backdrop of an ugly debate that seeks to splinter the nation state in India under the pretext of free speech. Treason and treachery continue to flourish in India. That is why we need to revive the ardent nationalism of Bose – an Indian Samurai par excellence.

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